ROOT & BRANCH

1:1 JUNE 1970 50¢

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June 1970

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ROOT & BRANCH is published monthly as magazine or pamphlet by Left Mailings, 275 River Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02139 USA. Subscriptions: one year for $5.00, six months for $3.00. (Make checks payable to Left Mailings)

Printed by the good
New England Free Press

NOTES ON THE POSTAL STRIKE

II

I

A new labor movement is being born in America. It is the autonomous creation of the working class. It exists more potentially then actually, but its early seeds are appearing in wildcat strikes in the trucking, air transport, and mail communications industries. These wildcat strikes differ from most others in recent labor history. Unlike the sporatic outbreaks of worker militancy outside union sanction in individual plants, the recent strikes have been national walkouts independent of the official labor movement. They have had a demonstrated capacity, moreover, to withstand invocations of union leadership for orderly procedure, government threats of legal reprisal, and apparent lack of national coordination except the universal idea of direct action to meet felt needs.

For years, most American workers and radicals within the labor movement were convinced of the absolute necessity of central organization on a national level to meet the corporations or the government on an equal footing. The local patterns of trade union organization predominant during the first sixty years after the Civil War were deemed inappropriate to the monopoly stage of capitalism, in which large national corporations with chains of plants dotting the country dominated the political economy.

The validity of this point of view was reinforced by the apparent success of the CIO and the Af of L which unionized multioccupationally most basic industries in the United States. The early successes of collective bargaining to achieve higher wages, fringe benefits, and some measure of worker control over the conditions of labor were attributed to the emergence of a bureaucracy which mirrored, in both scope and power, the structure of corporate capital.

Now, however, the central bureaucracies which control the trade unions have become an obstacle to the development of struggles centered on the elementary needs of workers. The strike of postal workers brought to the surface the sclerosis of the trade unions, exposed their alliance with the government against the workers, and ushered in nascent forms of workers direct action independent of the trade unions.

Several years ago, radicals in the United States and in Europe were proclaiming the end of deprivation as a central thread of working class action. However cognizant of the need to understand class exploitation as primarily the exploitation of labor, its alienation at the point of production, radical theorists of neo-capitalism consistently underestimated the importance of understanding the crisis of contemporary capitalism as reflected in the antagonism between wages and profits. Nor have we fully understood the significance of state workers in the political economy.

The position that struggles for economic demands were eminently cooptable was a response to the specific conditions of U.S. capitalism in the '50's and early '60's. The familiar wage struggles consisted in the expiration of a contract, a union strike call, and a quick statement with a mild wage increase, which was easily passed on by the corporations to the workers in higher prices. To radicals, this process looked hardly more revolutionary than any other business transaction.

The postal strike was completely different. From the first it was illegal. It did not play by the rules of the game. It fought national and local union leaderships tooth and nail. It was undeterred by appeals to patriotism and national interest. It based itself on the power of the workers, not on the goodwill of the bosses. Far from integrating the workers into the system, the postal struggle opposed its central institutions.

Nonetheless it was fundamentally a strike for higher incomes. Nor is it hard to understand why postmen should consider wage demands worth fighting for. Letter carriers make $6,176 to $8,442 annually. The Department of Labor considers $10,000 the minimum annual income for a family of four. Richard Nixon affirms postal workers have been underpaid for twenty-three years.

An index of the potential explosiveness of wage issues is the fact that the weekly earnings of the average non-farm non-supervising worker in the private economy last year was approximately $2.00 less than the "grossly underpaid" postal worker.

This is not to say that wage demands are *more* important than others. In fact, it is wrong to oppose economic and non-economic demands. The real question is whether the struggle is conducted in a way which uses and increases the workers' power, their freedom of action.

The post office strike demonstrated that many groups now share the social position once reserved for blue collar industrial workers. The postal workers are underpaid and exploited in precisely the way the industrial workers are, and they clearly have a critical role in the functioning of society.

The use of troops and the application of the full legal powers of the state in both the mail and the rail struggles reveal the centrality of these functions to U.S. capitalism. Free movement of the mails and commodities are an absolute condition to the system's maintenance, much less its expansion. The government had no choice but to play out the alternatives to insure the resumption of rail and mail service. In the rail dispute, severe legal sanctions, such as congressional action to suspend the provisions of the rail labor act and invocation of compulsory arbitration, seemed sufficient, at first, to dissuade the workers from direct action in disregard of union leaders and state decree. But the frustrations of postal workers built up over thirty years could not be suppressed through legal means alone.

Federal workers are completely dependent on congress for wage and benefit improvements, however infrequently enacted. The strike ban has always been held sacrosanct, however, by union leaders and the government. But the dual pressures of inflation and tedious work conditions with no significant upgrading opportunities became too much for postal workers who were forced to hold two jobs or go on supplementary welfare to support themselves and their families.

One of the more interesting features of the strike was the fact that many signals had been flashed to postal officials and the federal government long before the wildcat broke out. Stories in the daily press reported that postal workers were receiving public assistance to meet basic needs. Demonstrations and intensive lobbying activities had reached their high point immediately prior to the strike. Yet congress and the administration seemed powerless to act decisively to meet the income demands of the workers.

The Vietnam war, the permanent war economy, and the production of waste subsidized by federal expenditures appear to be logical explanations for the slow pace of government action to meet the modest wage demands of postal union officials. Beyond the fiscal crisis of the public sector induced by the direction of state spending stands the absolute refusal of corporate capital to reduce profits in order to support the public sector. On the contrary. Public services exist to support business. (Witness the absolute need to resume mail service in order to guarantee the flow of information to the stock market.) But the use of the taxing powers of the state to redistribute income between workers and capitalists turns back on itself. The increasing inefficiency of the mails in comparison with the increasing volume (itself a concomitant of capital expansion) is a direct result of the pauperization of the traditional public services.

Business has been unwilling to finance even those social costs immediately beneficial to itself. Instead, it demands that public services be turned over to the private sector. One of the issues raised by the administration in response to the strike was the necessity of postal "reform" as a condition for pay increases. The proposed postal reform was to abandon public ownership of the mail service and create a government-owned corporation to run the mails. This corporation, similar to quasi-public transit corporations, would be self-sustaining; that is, it would not receive funds from the general treasury in order to subsidize the postal system. Instead, operating costs would have to be met by operating income, essentially the price of stamps. Such a corporation could issue bonds to finance capital improvements, but the debt service would have to be paid for from operating income.

III

It is evident that as long as the war continues workers will bear its burden through lower real wages, higher taxes, unemployment, and inflation. In fact, real wages *cannot* be increased at the present time simply through strikes against one or another employer. This will have two effects on the labor movement. First, its actions will develop more and more into class actions, in response to the shifting of the burden of the war onto the workers. Second, its objectives will have to move beyond simple wage increases, which are impossible given present priorities. An end to the war and a shift in the tax burden will no doubt be two of the key demands. The program of the Alliance for Labor Action clearly reflects these tendencies. But the methods of struggle it proposes—union organizing and legislative lobbying—work only within a system which has sufficient resources to make concessions, not within a system which is already overextended and has its back against the wall.

The result is that the wildcat actions of the workers will more and more tend to become class actions and to become political. The pace of the process cannot be predicted—although a number of massive wildcat strikes for economic demands will probably be necessary before union leaderships are sufficiently discredited to permit workers'

consciousness to become aware of the need to engage in broader class and political actions independent of the trade unions.

The smell of general strike was in the air during the week long postal strike. *The Wall Street Journal* explicitly warned of it; and even Rademacher, president of the letter carriers union, threatened to ask George Meany [!] to call a general strike if the government refused to make concessions. The national administration and the corporate bourgeoisie experienced this nightmare for the first time since the great industrial union walkouts in 1946, when nearly three million workers in most basic industries left their jobs in order to counter the decline in real wages wrought by rising prices following the second world war. There were differences however. In 1946 the "first round" wage strikes were officially sanctioned and controlled throughout by liberal industrial union hierarchies. At no time were the channels of collective bargaining in danger of being overrun. In the postal strike, the workers went outside the union framework. The national leadership opposed the walkout and was able to maintain the accountability of local union leadership to its command until the rank and file revolt pushed some local heads to support the strike.

A second feature of the mail strike was that it represented the first national wildcat in recent labor history. The strike spread from New York City to Nassau and Westchester counties, upstate New York, and nearby New Jersey and Connecticut almost immediately. Within a few days, the wildcat became national, as postal workers in Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Los Angelos, San Francisco, and other major centers took the initiative on their own despite the pleading, cajolery, and threats of local and national union chieftains. The day after the strike began, the press was already speculating about the possibilities of a general strike of federal employees. John Griner, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, was reported by the Washington *Star* to say "that he had to intervene personally to prevent several strikes by his locals." Nathan Wolkimir, president of the National Federation of Federal Employees, considered conservative by trade union standards, said that NFFE locals throughout the country had indicated they wanted to strike in support of the postal workers. Alan Whitney, executive vice-president of the unaffiliated National Association of Government Employees, gave a radio interview in which he reported:

> We have been receiving phone calls from our various local presidents in various agencies throughout the government and throughout the country. They have watched events of the past days and have seen postal workers striking with a degree of impunity, and their question to us is, if they can do it, why can't we?

Whitney, Griner, and other leaders of government employees unions gave a standard answer to this question. "We advised them that it was against the law" (Nathan Wolkimir). Undoubtedly this advice served to dissuade those militants who were ready to strike, but were still under the hegemony of their union leadership. Whitney reported to the White House that "tremendous pressure" was being put on the national office of his union to authorize strikes, especially "one of our biggest defense locals whose primary duty is to supply the war effort in Southeast Asia."

Simultaneously, municipal employees in San Francisco and Atlanta took to the streets. Similar demands informed their struggle. The up front public issue was the failure of congress to enact a substantial postal pay increase. The spectre haunting local governments haunted the Nixon administration as well. Even if the postal demands could be met, suppose all municipal, state, and federal employees were to join the struggle? Beyond this possibility was the danger that stalled teamster negotiations would result in a transportation wildcat, and perhaps trigger action by industrial workers. President Fitzsimmons of the Teamsters warned that "the natives are restless," an apparent attempt to force the trucking companies into a quick settlement, in order to forestall an event mutually undesirable to the unions, the companies, and the government.

There is little doubt that there was tremendous pressure from the ranks for widening the struggle beyond the postal strike, on the one hand, and various local disputes, on the other. National union leaders, taken aback by the temerity of the rank and file, recovered their composure. Simultaneously, they urged a back to work movement among the workers and attempted to force concessions from the administration. To the workers, the passivity of the AFL-CIO leaders was a clear indication of their fright at the implications of the postal walkout. They remained publicly mute throughout the one week strike, working "behind the scenes" to bring the Administration and congressional leaders to the bargaining table in order to settle the strike on the basis of a non-inflationary wage increase commensurate with cost of living increases since 1967. The postal settlement was in accord with the GE settement. Union objectives were to recover lost ground, not to make substantial gains in real wages.

But the postal workers could not be herded back to work by peaceful means. Neither the promise of a piddling wage increase with a provision for achieving top rate after eight years instead of twenty years nor appeals to patriotism and the rule of the law was successful. The President was forced to resort to his ultimate weapon: the use of troops as strike-breakers in the most militant section of the 180,000 walkout—New York. Even though the troops were unarmed, the coercive implications of 25,000 of them in the post offices were not lost on the workers. Contrary to romantic leftist notions of impending bloodshed, most letter carriers were genuinely intimidated by the presence of the troops. They were unprepared, psychologically and militarily, to counter them effectively. The combination of congressional promises of a substantial wage increase and the massive presence of troops was sufficient to break the back of the strike for the time being.

But the end of the strike is not attributable merely to the show of state power and/or trade union constraint of the workers. More important than either of them was the failure of the strike to spread to other federal workers and beyond them to industrial workers. Short of a widenting strike on generalized demands all struggles end in negotiated compromise. The material conditions existed for a wider strike. Conjuncturally, teamsters and auto workers face the most difficult negotiations in years. The current recession has produced stiffer corporate resistance to wage demands which would alter the relationship between profits and wages should international competition make it more difficult to offset wage increases by higher prices. Rank and file restlessness nevertheless has not reached the point of revolt against the trade unions and the employers in substantial parts of basic

industry.

But the air controllers were ready and did strike. Workers in all public services, traditionally the least cohesive, are furious at the inability and unwillingness of the state to meet their needs. Implicit in their readiness to struggle for quantitative demands is their refusal to accept the sacrifices made necessary by the defense effort. The Vietnam war has lost its magic among workers who have been told they must subordinate their needs to national priorities—to militant anti-communism, that is, waged on their (the workers') backs. To be sure, there is no conscious rejection of these priorities. But the wildcat strikes evoked a decree of national emergency from the President amid arguments that vital services were being impaired. Most apparent was the inability of most workers to make an explicit connection between their strike and its ideological consequences not only in relation to the war, but more importantly, in relation to the legitimacy of the law as a determinant of social behavior. The workers *acted* subversively without bringing this subversion to consciousness. They had refused in practice to subordinate their own interests to the national interest, traditionally defined, but could not perceive it in its most general aspect, the struggle against state prerogative over them.

In some cities the union was able to maintain complete control. Postal workers in Washington, D.C., asked whether or not they were going to strike, often replied that they did not know. It was being decided for them by the officers; they were waiting, that is, for word from above. Meanwhile the president of the local announced on television that "the reason the D.C. workers are not out is that the local is doing everything possible to keep them form going out." When the membership arrived at the union hall for a meeting, which had been announced publicly, they found the hall locked and guarded. The leadership's attitude was we'll let you know when the national calls a strike. A general meeting of the local was not called until almost a week after the New York strike had begun. Wildcat advocates were not allowed to speak at the meeting. One of them had his union card torn up when he presented it to get in. (He never did get in.) A vote was announced. But what was being voted on was uncertain. The membership, it seems, was confused. The leadership, not at all. The meeting, it announced, had voted against a strike.

The wildcat forces met on the lawn in front of the main post office, but did not have sufficient strength to call a strike. They were weak, in part, because the strike nationally had peaked, and many other cities were going back to work. The local's stalling techniques had been successful. Two other conditions explain Washington's lack of militancy. First, the basic industry of the city is government, and government workers have no tradition of strikes; they have instead remnants of an ideology of "public service responsibility." Second, perhaps even more than elsewhere, D.C. postal workers are predominantly black, but D.C. has perhaps the most middle-class black community of any major city, based on access to government jobs and the security-consciousness which such jobs appeal to and generate. These same conditions were no doubt important in preventing the strike from spreading to other government workers in Washington. They will continue to retard as well such developments in the future.

In other major cities, however, black workers and young workers were the cutting edge of the walkout. In strike bound cities such as Detroit, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York, approximately 50% to 75% of the workers are black, many of them in their twenties and thirties. Black workers predominate because government employment, particularly in the post office, is one of the few opportunities for black men to get steady work at wages over $100 a week. Many black workers in the post office are college educated. Many of them have received two or four year college degrees. Still, a job in the post office represents an important means of gaining job security and a regular income.

The strike suggests further that new relations between the black and white movements impend. When the issue is access to a few hundred skilled construction jobs in one city, black workers have no choice but to attack white workers' privileges; and the white workers, in turn, no choice but to defend their jobs. When the issue becomes a struggle by tens of thousands of workers against employers and the state, the need for solidarity becomes evident to everyone, and the special militancy of blacks becomes an extra force for unity, their special oppression an added fuel to the struggle against the common enemy. In a period of rising labor militancy, we may expect organizations with a specifically working class base, like DRUM, to become increasingly significant in the black movement; and those with a bourgeois or street-culture base, to become relatively less significant. Race contraditions will feed, not counteract, class contradictions.

IV

The fact that the struggle for immediate demands never grew into a struggle for more general political and social demands is not a function of the failure of radical political education to make the connections ideologically. It is rather the inability of the postal workers to spread the struggle to other workers—other federal workers, to begin with. One reason for this failure was the relatively short duration of the strike, itself a consequence of its narrowness. Another was the fact that the impulses to struggle among federal workers who wished to join the strike were effectively emasculated by union bureaucrats to whom militants turned for leadership. The reliance of federal workers on union leadership remained an internal barrier to a widened struggle. The trade union consciousness among federal workers reflects the relative newness of union organization among them.

If radicals had a role to play in the postal strike, it was not primarily to educate the postal workers, but to agitate for conditions which provide the soil of revolutionary education—to agitate, that is, for widened struggle. Radicals in Washington did address other federal workers.* But in most places, radicals contented themselves with organizing support demonstrations

*Radicals in D.C. understood the need to support the strike, but were hindered in their efforts because there was no strike or organized wildcat movement to relate to locally. Responding to reports that government union officials were being bombarded by calls demanding strikes, one group of radicals distributed the leaflet "If They Did It, Why Can't We?" throughout eight government agencies. The mobiliza-

in town squares or with truncated attempts at "political education" without benefit of substantial contacts among postal workers. Most of the leaflets handed out to postal workers were politically "correct." They opposed the troop intervention; they connected the decline of real wages to the war and to corporate capitalist profit grabbing; and they tried to put forth a program of demands for postal workers, in incredible exercise in arrogance and abstract polics.

The brave attempts of organized radicals to be relevant to workers' struggles represents an advance over the situation several years ago. But radical consciousness still appears as an outside force. It still does not function as a tendency within the class. If radicals are to be relevant to workers, it is their vision, their description of alternatives to the modes of hierarchy which dominate the workers, which constitutes their primary contribution. Not their support for strikes at given levels. Nor their attempts to evolve demands or organizational strategies. The concrete aid radicals can render is to help widen the struggle to other industrial sectors, including those in which they are, themselves, employed.

V

The postal strike makes vivid what state socialism means for workers—conditions identical to or worse than those in the private economy. The post office is, after all, a "nationalized" enterprise. Yet its workers are paid worse than those in the private sector, dominated just as thoroughly, deprived even more of such fundamentals as the right to strike, and enmeshed in bureaucracy. If the socialism is viewed as a system in which "the government owns everything and everybody works for the government," it is hardly surprising that workers—and everybody else except potential government bureaucrats—shies away from it.

As the struggle of public workers become more important in the general movement of workers, the problem of redefining the socialist vision will become more acute for radicals. Clearly, the convergence of future state socialist solutions with contemporary state capitalism indicates the task for socialists. The socialist vision must be discussed as the control by the producers of their work and of all institutions of society. The wildcat strikes, directed against the corporations, the state, and their ideological apparatuses (e.g., the trade unions) imply an action critique of bureaucracy and hierarchy. Because state socialism preserves all the forms of capitalist domination and changes only the masters, it is not surprising that workers will have nothing to do with left wing alternatives which offer nothing better than a new bureaucracy.

In the postal workers strike, we can see a new labor movement struggling to free itself from the womb of the old one.

In the struggle between the wildcat movement and the unions, we can see the struggle between two principles of workers' organization. Here, decision-making in free assembly, willingness to struggle within and without the law, mobilization of the workers' real power, spreading solidarity, intransigence, self-direction, action; there, obedience, division of the workers from each other, groveling before power (institutional and individual), authoritarianism.

In the postal strike and in the rising labor discontent, we can see the development of a new alignment of forces in America. During the 1960's the forces of movement in society were blacks and students. The middle and working classes opposed them both and looked to quasi-fascist solutions of increasing state dictatorship to protect their positions. But as the postal strike shows, in a non-expanding economy, the state must oppose even the day-to-day struggles of the workers. The convergence of radicalized workers with the student and black movements will be long and difficult, but it is pushed forward daily by developments within society. Only within the context of such realignment is serious struggle against fascism and repression, let alone revolutionary advance, possible.

Stanley Aronowitz
and
Jeremy Brecher

tion distributed a leaflet relating the strike to the war throughout downtown Washington. The D.C. Labor Committee, the Young Patriots, and a radical union of D.C. sewer workers sent representatives to the wildcat meeting when it finally occurred. Nobody was able to respond effectively, however, to the actual situation of the D.C. postal workers. Nobody had substantive contacts with lower level government workers throughout the city.

UNFRIENDLY SKIES

Two days after Nixon broke the letter carriers' strike the air traffic controllers walked off their jobs and stayed out for three weeks. The controllers called in sick, attempting to avoid the still legal penalties for striking.

The air traffic controller has the most difficult job in the aviation industry. The airline pilot's workload is reduced by the auto-pilot, the co-pilot and the flight engineer. And the pilot is limited to 85 flying hours a month. Controllers face constant pressure and must make hundreds of correct- immediate- decisions ten hours a day, six days a week.

The controller uses radar and radio to keep planes separated. Often the pilot does not even know where he is. When planes head toward busy airports for landing, the controller brings them in separating them by the legal limit of 3 miles. And 3 miles at 180 knots approach speed is only 1 minute of flying time. The controllers had to organize against the FAA to maintain this 3 mile limit. Controllers have told me that there are near mid-air collisions in the clouds that pilots never know about. When planes change their routing to avoid thunderstorms the safety margin is especially thin.

The controller is at the mercy of antique and inadequate equipment. At the Kennedy Approach Control center the radar failed while a controller was bringing six planes into JFK. The controller sent the first plane up, the second one down, the third to the right, and the fourth to the left. The fifth one he told to continue straight ahead. And to plane six he said "I'm sorry buddy, you're going to have to stop right where you are."

When the radio transmitter fails, the controller must watch silently on radar as targets converge and hopefully keep on going.

During the 1960's the volume and speed of air traffic increased phenomenally. But the government spent little money on improving and modernizing the air traffic control system. From 1964 to 1968 no controllers were hired. This meant that each controller had to handle many more planes. To prevent delays the controllers were forced to violate the government's own safety rules.

In 1968 the controllers threw out a government union and organized PATCO (Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization). They began "Operation Air Safety" in the summer of 1968. They collectively refused to squeeze planes dangerously close together.

Since 1968 the government has been hiring controller trainees. But it takes 3 to 4 years to train a man for radar traffic control. In the meantime the regular controllers have the added burden of training the new men in addition to doing their jobs. Often the trainees learn by controlling actual planes. In Puerto Rico nineteen persons lost their lives when a plane was sent into a mountain by a trainee. His instructor was busy with regular duties.

The major high-density control centers were the heart of the "sick-out." Most of the present controllers were hired in the 1956-58 period and are now in their mid-thirties. Their health and ability to control traffic is failing due to the constant strain. A recent medical survey of controllers found 68% have chest pains, 81% vomited blood, and 95% had visual disturbance (double vision). The FAA will not let them transfer to other less intense centers. To retire they must have 30 years of service or be 55 years old.

Last summer FAA boss, John Shaffer, testified before a congressional committee that the controllers were not underpaid or overworked. Spontaneously controllers across the country called in sick for several days. Since that time, the FAA has stepped up harassment of PATCO members. PATCO lost its dues checkoff privilege.

Before the recent strike the FAA had refused to negotiate the PATCO demands: 20 years retirement, 30 hour week, higher pay, and better equipment. The final blow came when the FAA gave involuntary transfers to three Baton Rouge PATCO members. Three thousand five hundred controllers called in sick out of a total of 8,500 workers.

During the sick-out, the controllers came under intense pressure from the FAA and the airlines. The airline organization (the Air Transport Association) sued each controller individually for damages. The suit is still pending. The FAA sent telegrams of dismissal and suspension to the "sick" controllers. The government forced the PATCO officers to call off the strike; and the officers publicly ordered the men to return to work. In consequence, the issues were confused for the public and for other aviation workers.

The FAA used supervisors who had little current experience and trainees to keep the system going during the sick-out. The rate of near mid-air collision was four times normal. The controllers tried to get the pilots to support their action. But ALPA (Airline Pilots Association), the pilots' organization, is very conservative. ALPA denied the FAA would let them fly if conditions were unsafe. The FAA claimed the airways were safe, because the pilots were flying.

The controllers went back after a compromise was mediated by a federal judge. The FAA promised negotiations and no reprisals when the controllers returned to work. After the men went back, however, the FAA transferred PATCO officers to clerical jobs. PATCO went back to the federal judge who had worked out the compromise and he ordered the FAA to return the men to their regular jobs. The three Baton Rouge men have since been fired.

The FAA has started negotiations with PATCO on the controller demands. The FAA promises action, but the controllers are waiting to see what will happen. Many of them are talking about working for the Canadian Air Traffic Control system.

There have been some changes. In the New York Center the men are now working a five day week. The workload is the same but the overtime has been reduced. The airlines have not gone back to their regular schedules and the men are enforcing "flow control" procedures on the airlines. That is, planes now wait on the ground to prevent delays in the air.

The airlines operate with average flights only half filled. Much airline congestion is caused by competitive pressures. Each airline wants its flights to leave at the rush hours.

PATCO is both a workers' movement and a traditional trade union. PATCO officers would be happy to mediate between the men and the FAA. PATCO wants arbitration and

dues checkoff. It attempted to conduct the sick-out within the legal system. There were no demonstrations at airports or FAA centers to spread the strike. The controllers were able to stop half of all airline flights during their strike, but they did not win their demands.

The controllers' struggle has changed their political views. They are more sympathetic to the current student strike against the war. They have understood the necessity of direct action. Traditional trade union methods cannot deal with the basic problems in the aviation industry. The airlines are buying expensive jumbo jets which they do not need, and their losses increase. With profits declining the airlines will step up their pressure to compromise safety. Major airlines have already begun to lay off workers.

Only a revolutionary movement for workers control of industry will guarantee jobs and safety. Aviation workers who daily risk their lives—as well as the lives of thousands of passengers—in unsafe conditions must begin to build that movement. The controllers may go on strike again if the FAA does not submit to their demands. When the controllers go out again, they should not be alone. Pilots, ground workers, and other FAA employees should join them to fight resolutely for air safety, better working conditions, and more jobs.

Red Sky
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The Power to Destroy—The Power to Create

The power of this society to destroy has reached a scale unprecedented in the history of humanity—and this power is being used, almost systematically, to work an insensate havoc upon the entire world of life and its material bases.

In nearly every region, air is being befouled, waterways polluted, soil washed away, the land dessicated, and wildlife destroyed. Coastal areas and even the depths of the sea are not immune to widespread pollution. More significantly in the long run, basic biological cycles such as the carbon cycle and nitrogen cycle, upon which all living things (including humans) depend for the maintenance and renewal of life, are being distorted to the point of irreversible damage. The wanton introduction of radioactive wastes, long-lived pesticides, lead residues, and thousands of toxic or potentially toxic chemicals in food, water, and air; the expansion of cities into vast urban belts, with dense concentrations of populations comparable in size to entire nations; the rising din of background noise; the stresses created by congestion, mass living, and mass manipulation; the immense accumulations of garbage, refuse, sewage, and industrial wastes; the congestion of highways and city streets with vehicular traffic; the profligate destruction of precious raw materials; the scarring of the earth by real estate speculators, mining and lumbering barons, and highway construction bureaucrats—all, have wreaked a damage in a single generation that exceeds the damage inflicted by thousands of years of human habitation on his planet. If this tempo of destruction is borne in mind, it is terrifying to speculate about what lies ahead in the generation to come.

The essence of the ecological crisis in our time is that this society—more than any other in the past—is literally undoing the work of organic evolution. It is a truism to say that humanity is part of the fabric of life. It is perhaps more important at this late stage to emphasize that humanity depends critically upon the complexity and variety of life, that human well-being and survival rest upon a long evolution of organisms into increasingly complex and interdependent forms. The development of life into a complex web, the elaboration of primal animals and plants into highly varied forms, has been the precondition for the evolution and survival of humanity itself and for a harmonized relationship between humanity and nature.

Technology and Population

If the past generation has witnessed a despoilation of the planet that exceeds all the damage inflicted by earlier generations, little more than a generation may remain before the destruction of the environment becomes irreversible. For this reason, we must look at the roots of the ecological crisis with ruthless honesty. Time is running out and the remaining decades of the twentieth century may well be the last opportunity we will have to restore the balance between humanity and nature.

Do the roots of the ecological crisis lie in the development of technology? Technology has become a convenient target for bypassing the deep-seated social conditions that make machines and technical processes harmful.

How convenient it is to forget that technology has served not only to subvert the environment but also to improve it. The Neolithic Revolution which produced the most harmonious period between nature and post-paleolithic humanity was above all a technological revolution. It was this period that brought to humanity the arts of agriculture, weaving, pottery, the domestication of animals, the discovery of the wheel, and many other key advances. True there are techniques and technological attitudes that are entirely destructive of the balance between humanity and nature. Our responsibilites are to separate the promise of technology—its creative potential—from the capacity of technology to destroy. Indeed, there is no such word as "Technology" that presides over all social conditions and relations; there are different technologies and attitudes toward technology, some of which are indispensable to restoring the balance, others of which have contributed profoundly to its destruction. What humanity needs is not a wholesale discarding of advanced technologies, but a sifting, indeed a further development of technology along ecological principles that will contribute to a new harmonization of society and the natural world.

Do the root of the ecological crisis lie in population growth? This thesis is the most disquieting, and in many ways the most sinister, to be advanced by ecology action movements in the United States. Here, an *effect* called "population growth," juggled around on the basis of superficial statistics and projections, is turned into a *cause*. A problem of secondary proportions at the present time is given primacy, thus obscuring the fundamental reasons for the ecological crisis. True, if present economic, political & social conditions prevail, humanity will in time overpopulate the planet and by sheer weight of numbers turn into a pest in its own global habitat. There is something obscene, however, about the fact that an effect, "population growth," is being given primacy in the ecological crisis by a nation which has little more than seven percent of the world's population, wastefully devours more than fifty percent of the world's resources, and is currently engaged in the depopulation of an Oriental people that has lived for centuries in sensitive balance with its environment.

We must pause to look more carefully into the population problem, touted so widely by the white races of North American and Europe—races that have wantonly exploited the people of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the South Pacific. The exploited have delicately advised their exploiters that, what they need are not contraceptive devices, armed "liberators," and Prof. Paul R. Ehrlich to resolve their population problems; rather, what they need is a fair return on the immense resources that were plundered from their lands by North America and Europe. To balance these accounts is more of a pressing need at the present time than to balance birth rates and death rates. The peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the South Pacific can justly point out that their American "advisors" have shown the world how to despoil a virgin continent in less than a century and have added the words "built-in obsolescence" to the vocabulary of humanity.

This much is clear: when large labor reserves were needed during the Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century to man factories and depress wages, population growth was greeted enthusiastically by the new industrial bourgeoisie. And the growth of population occurred despite the fact that, owing to long working

hours and grossly overcrowded cities, tuberculosis, cholera, and other diseases were pandemic in Europe and the United States. If birth rates exceeded death rates at this time, it was not because advances in medical care and sanitation had produced any dramatic decline in human mortality; rather, the excess of birth rates over death rates can be explained by the destruction of preindustrial family forms, village insstitutions, mutual aid, and stable, traditional patterns of life at the hands of capitalist "enterprise." The decline of social morale ushered in by the horrors of the factory system, the degradation of traditional agrarian peoples into grossly exploited proletarians and urban dwellers, produced a concomittantly irresponsible attitude toward the family and the begetting of children. Sexuality became a refuge from a life of toil on the same order as the consumption of cheap gin; the new proletariat reproduced children, many of whom were never destined to survive into adulthood, as mindlessly as it drifted into alcoholism. Much the same process occurred when the villages of Asia, Africa, and Latin America were sacrificed on the holy alter of imperialism.

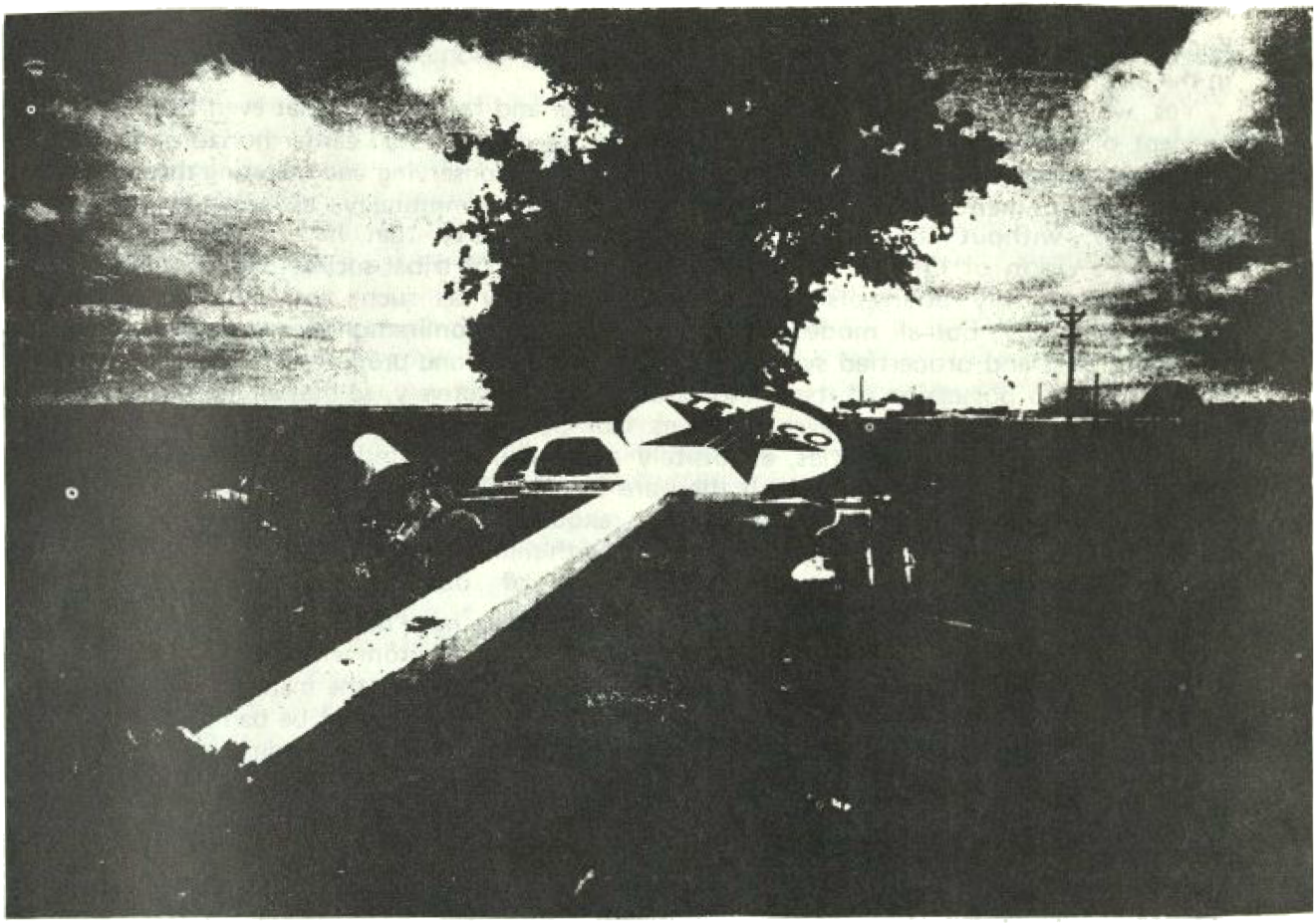
Today, the bourgeoisie "sees" things differently. The roseate years of "free enterprise" and "free labor" are waning before an era of monopoly, cartels, state-controlled economies, institutionalized forms of labor mobilization (trade unions), and automatic or cybernetic machinery. Large reserves of unemployed labor are no longer needed to meet the needs of capital expansion, and wages are largely negotiated rather than left to the free play of the labor market. From a need, idle labor reserves have now turned into a threat to the stability of a managed bourgeois economy. The logic of this new "perspective" found its most terrifying expression in German fascism. To the Nazis, Europe was already "over-populated" in the thirties and the "population problem" was "solved" in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. The same logic is implicit in many of the neo-Malthusian arguments that masquerade as ecology today. Let there be no mistake about this conclusion.

Sooner or later the mindless proliferation of human beings will have to be arrested, but population control will either be initiated by "social controls" (authoritarian or racist methods and eventually be systematic genocide) or by a libertarian, ecologically oriented society (a society that develops a new balance with nature out of a reverence for life). Modern society stands before these mutually exclusive alternatives and a choice must be made without dissimulation. Ecology action is fundamentally social action. Either we will go directly to the social roots of the ecological crisis today or we will be deceived into an era of totalitarianism.

Ecology and Society

The basic conception that humanity must dominate and exploit nature stems from the domination and exploitation of man by man. Indeed, this conception goes back earlier to a time when men began to dominate and exploit women in the patriarchal family. From that point onward, human beings were increasingly regarded as mere resources, as objects instead of subjects. The hierarchies, classes, propertied forms, and statist institutions that emerged with social domination were carried over conceptually into humanity's relationship with nature. Nature too became increasingly regarded as a mere resource, an object, a raw material to be exploited as ruthlessly as slaves on a latifundium. This "worldview" permeated not only the official culture of hierarchical society; it became the way in which slaves, serfs, industrial workers and women of all social classes began to view themselves. As embodied in the "work ethic," in a morality based on denial and renunciation, in a mode of behavior based on the sublimation of erotic desires, and in otherworldly outlooks (be they European or Asian), the slaves, serfs, workers, and female half of humanity were taught to police themselves, to fashion their own chains, to close the doors on their own prison cells.

If the "worldview" of hierarchical society is beginning to wane today, this is mainly because the enormous productivity of modern technology has opened a new vision: the possibility of material abundance, an end to scarcity, and an era of free



time (so-called "leisure time") with minimal toil. Our society is becoming permeated by a tension between "what-is" and "what-could-be," a tension exacerbated by the irrational, inhuman exploitation and destruction of the earth and its inhabitants. The greatest impediment that obstructs a resolution of this tension is the extent to which hierarchical society still fashions our outlook and actions. It is easier to take refuge in critiques of technology and population growth; to deal with an archaic, destructive social system on its own terms and within its own framework. Almost from birth, we have been socialized by the family, religious institutions, schools, and by the work process itself into accepting hierarchy, renunciation, and statist systems as the premises on which all thinking must rest. Without sheding these premises, all discussions of ecological balance must remain palliative and self-defeating.

By virtue of its unique cultural baggage, modern society—profit-oriented bourgeois society—tends to exacerbate humanity's conflict with nature in a more critical fashion than pre-industrial societies of the past. In bourgeois society, humans are not only turned into objects; they are turned into commodities; into objects explicitly designed for sale on the market place. Competition between human beings, qua commodities, becomes an end in itself, together with the production of utterly useless goods. Quality is turned into quantity, individual culture into mass culture, personal communication into mass communication. The natural environment is turned into a gigantic factory, the city into an immense market place; everything from a Redwood forest to a woman's body has "a price." Everything is equatable in dollar-and-cents, be it a hallowed cathedral or individual honor. Technology ceases to be an extension of humanity; humanity becomes an extension of technology. The machine does not expand the power of the worker; the worker expands the power of the machine, indeed, he becomes a mere part of the machine.

Is it surprising, then, that this exploitative, degrading, quantified society pits humanity against itself and against nature on a more awesome scale than any other in the past?

Yes, we need change, but change so fundamental and far-reaching that even the concept of revolution and freedom must be expanded beyond all earlier horizons. No longer is it enough to speak of new techniques for conserving and fostering the natural environment; we must deal with the earth communally, as a human collectivity, without those trammels of private property that have distorted humanity's vision of life and nature since the break-up of tribal society. We must eliminate not only bourgeois hierarchy, but hierarchy as such; not only the patriarchal family, but all modes of sexual and parental domination; not only the bourgeois class and propertied system, but all social classes and property. Humanity must come into possestion of itself, individually and collectively, so that all human beings attain control of their everyday lives. Our cities must be decentralized into communities, or ecocommunities, exquisitely and artfully tailored to the carrying capacity of the ecosystems in which they are located. Our technologies must be readapted and advanced into ecotechnologies, exquisitely and artfully adapted to make use of local energy sources and materials, with minimal or no pollution of the environment. We must recover a new sense of our needs—needs that foster a healthful life and express our individual proclivities, not "needs" dictated by the mass media. We must restore the human scale in our environment and in our social relations, replacing mediated by direct personal relations in the management of society. Finally, all modes of domination—social or personal—must be banished from our conceptions of ourselves, our fellow humans, and nature. The administration of humans must be replaced by the administration of things. The revolution we seek must encompass not only political institutions and economic relations, but consciousness, life style, erotic desires, and our interpretation of the meaning of life.

What is in the balance, here, is the age-long spirit and systems of domination and repression that have not only pitted human against human, but humanity against nature. The conflict between humanity and nature is an extension of the conflict between human and human. Unless the ecology movement encompasses the problem of domination in all its aspects, it will contribute nothing toward eliminating the root causes of the ecological crisis of our time. If the ecology movement stops at mere reforms in pollution and conservation control without dealing radically with the need for an expanded concept of revolution it will merely serve as a safety valve for the existing system of natural and human exploitation.

Goals

In some respects the ecology movement today is waging a delaying action against the rampant destruction of the environment. In other respects its most conscious elements are involved in a creative movement to totally revolutionize the social relations of humans to each other and of humanity to nature.

Although they closely interpenetrate, the two efforts should be distinguished from each other. Ecology Action East supports every effort to conserve the environment: to preserve clean air and water, to limit the use of pesticides and food additives, to reduce vehicular traffic in streets and on highways, to make cities more wholesome physically, to prevent radioactive wastes from seeping into the environment, to guard and expand wilderness areas and domains for wildlife, to defend animal species from human depredation.

But Ecology Action East does not deceive itself that such delaying actions constitute a solution to the fundamental conflict that exists between the present social order and the natural world. Nor can such delaying actions arrest the overwhelming momentum of the existing society for destruction.

This social order plays games with us. It grants long-delayed, piecemeal, and woefully inadequate reforms to deflect our energies and attention from larger acts of

destruction. In a sense, we are "offered" a patch of Redwood forest in exchange for the Cascades. Viewed in a larger perspective, this attempt to reduce ecology to a barter relationship does not rescue anything; it is cheap *modus operandi* for trading away the greater part of the planet for a few islands of wilderness, for pocket parks in a devastated world of concrete.

Ecology Action East has two primary aims: one is to increase in the revolutionary movement the awareness that the most destructive and pressing consequences of our alienating, exploitative society is the environmental crisis, and that truly revolutionary society must be built upon ecological precepts; the other is to create, in the minds of the millions of Americans who are concerned with the destruction of our environment, the consciousness that the principles of ecology, carried to their logical end, demand radical changes in our society and our way of looking at the world.

Ecology Action East takes its stand with the life-style revolution that, at its best, seeks an expanded consciousness of experience and human freedom. We seek the liberation of women, of children, of gay people, of black people and colonial peoples, and of working people in all occupations as part of a growing social struggle against the age-old traditions and institutions of domination—traditions and institutions that have so destructively shaped humanity's attitude toward the natural world. We support libertarian communities and struggles for freedom wherever they arise; we take our stand with every effort to promote the spontaneous self-development of the young; we oppose every effort to repress human sexuality, to deny humanity the eroticization of experience in all its forms. We join in all endeavors to foster a joyous artfulness in life and work: the promotion of crafts and quality production, the design of new ecocommunities and ecotechnologies, the right to experience on a daily basis the beauty of the natural world, the open, unmeditated, sensuous pleasure that humans can give to each other, the growing reverence for the world of life.

In short, we hope for a revolution which will produce politically independent communities whose boundaries and populations will be defined by a new ecological consciousness; communities whose inhabitants will determine for themselves within the framework of this new consciousness the nature and level of their technologies, the forms taken by their social structures, world views, life styles, expressive arts, and all other aspects of their daily lives.

But we do not delude ourselves that this life-oriented world can be fully developed or even partially achieved in a death-oriented society. American society, as it is constituted today, is riddled with racism and sits astrde the entire world, not only as a consumer of its wealth and resources, but as an obstacle to all attempts at self-determination at home and abroad. Its inherent aims are production for the sake of production, the preservation of hierarchy and toil on a world scale, mass manipulation and control by centralized, statist institutions. This kind of society is unalterably counterposed to a life-oriented world. If the ecology movement does not draw these conclusions from its efforts to conserve the natural environment, then conservation becomes mere obscurantism. If the ecology movement does not direct its main efforts toward a revolution in all areas of life—social as well as natural, political as well as personal, economic as well as cultural—then the movement will gradually become a safety valve for the established order. It is our hope that groups like our own will spring up throughout the country, organized like ourselves on a humanistic, libertarian basis, engaged in mutual action and a spirit of cooperation based on mutual aid. It is our hope that they will try to foster a new ecological attitude not only toward nature but also toward humans: a conception of spontaneous, variegated relations within groups and between groups, within society and between individuals.

We hope that ecology groups will eschew all appeals to the "heads of government" and to international or national state institutions, the very criminals and political bodies that have materially contributed to the ecological crisis of our time. We believe the appeals must be made to the people and to their capacity for direct action that can get them to take control of their own lives and destinies. For

only in this way can a society emerge without hierarchy and domination, a society in which each individual is the master of his or her own fate.

The great splits which divided human from human, humanity from nature, individual from society, town from country, mental from physical activity, reason from emotion, and generation from generation must now be transcended. The fulfillment of the age-old quest for survival and material security in a world of scarcity was once regarded as the precondition for freedom and a fully human life. To live we had to survive. As Brecht put it: "First feed the face, then give the moral."

The situation has now begun to change. The ecological crisis of our time has increasingly reversed this traditional maxim. Today, if we are to survive, we must begin to live. Our solutions must be commensurable with the scope of the problem, or else nature will take a terrifying revenge on humanity.

Ecology Action East

Old Left, New Left, What's Left?

The last six months of the sixties presented American radicals with an apparently incongrous pair of events: a massive revival of the anti-war movement and the disintegration of the organization which has for some time been justifiably identified with the "new left" itself, SDS. After a year or so of demonstrations in which growing militance of slogan was matched by decreasing numbers of participants, half a million people turned out in Washington in November to protest the war in Vietnam. An enormous part of this crowd was new to demonstrating. Significant also was the fact that, though still largely made up of students, it included larger numbers drawn from other social groups than ever before: white collar workers such as secretaries; young "professionals" (doctors and lawyers); high-schoolers; and GI's. (as well as the stockbrokers and small businessmen worried about the threat to "American stability" posed by the continuing war). Notably absent as an organizational force was the SDS which existed before its June convention in Chicago. The Weathermen, Crazies, and Mad Dogs showed up to gather those desirous of physical "militance" for a brass-knuckled attack on imperialism, but the thousands who followed them to DuPont Circle did so more out of frustration with the flaccid atmosphere of Give Peace a Chance than out of support for Weathermen politics. WSA-SDS, which in October had by and large confined itself to pointing out the futility of the Moratorium and urging devotion to the true focus of struggle on trade union organizing on and off the campus, had to be forced to follow the "liberal" masses to Washington.

This pair of phenomena may serve as an excellent symbol for the situation confronting what has thought of itself as the "new left". They bear witness, on the one hand, to the continuing destructive character of capitalism, represented most saliently by the adventures of American imperialism in Asia; and, on the other, to the failure of the new left to develop modes of thought and action capable of clarifying the way to a socialist society.

The reborn peace movement does not represent a new stage in the development of American radicalism, but rather an enlargement of what existed before: mass "middle class" discontent with the war mobilized to exercise its constitutional rights of assembly and petition (and seemingly open to being channelled into dove electoral campaigns, thus providing a forum for leftish propagandizing and exhortation. At the same time, the failure of the left to respond in any inspiring way to this newly active discontent will not be usefully analyzed in terms of the evil work of the Progressive Labor Party or of the other political factions whose battle-ground SDS became until the fabric parted from the strain. An attempt to analyze our current possibilities and predicaments must be based on an understanding of the new left's context in a realistic appraisal of the social forces shaped by present day capitalist development.

I

The "new left" (by which I mean the predominantly student movements focussing most forcefully on racism and war) has been a phenomenon of the sixties, beginning thus in a period hailed as one of prosperity for American (and world) capitalism. How is this to be explained? The underlying phenomena are hard to grasp; on the surface they are visible in the form of the permanence of racism and poverty in the "affluent" society, the necessity of imperialist war making good use of the permanent war economy, and the increasing economic difficulties seen through the bourgeois economists' glass darkly as the dilemma of "high employment versus price stability."

Postwar American prosperity might in fact be better characterized as pseudo-prosperity, from the point of view of the classical capitalist economy. While a level of physical existence has been achieved for large enough numbers of the working class sufficient to maintain social equilibrium, this has been accomplished since the twenties only thanks to steadily increasing government interventions into the economy. Since capitalist "economic activity is immediately animated and guided, not by the quest of satisfactions, but by the quest of profits"(W.C. Mitchell), the prosperity of the post-Depression "mixed economy" represents not a true capitalist boom but rather a response to the inability of the economy to generate a rate of profit sufficiently high to make possible an accelerated rate of accumulation. Because its role is played outside of, and in lieu of, the investment-profit-expanded investment cycle of the capitalist system, the expanding "public sector," while successful so far in maintaining social stability, cannot solve the essential problem of declining profitability. Indeed, it even accentuates it, as eventually the expansion of non-market, non-productive (of profit) production must inhibit the growth of a private sector growing at a slower rate, even while it is necessary if the private sector is to continue to exist at all. The results of what may well be described as a permanent crisis situation have been: stagnation in "growth", employment rates, and working class living standards; the "sacrifice" or minimal public support of unabsorbable elements of the population, such as the Applachian poor whites and masses of the blacks; and attempts to extend and secure control over the Third

World to allow for hoped-for economic development under American corporate auspices.

If this is the general background, the reaction to the conditions thus described on the part of "middle class" students has been immediately due to particular changes in mode of life experienced by this part of the population in the course of capitalism's adjustment to its new conditions of existence. These are due both to the continuation of processes operative throughout the history of capitalist society and to the new features introduced with the mixed economy. Changes in technology (if not amounting to a "new industrial revolution") have resulted in a rising proportional importance of white collar labor at all levels of industry, from Research and Development to production. The same trend in employment has come from the increasing bureaucratization of industry made necessary by the advance of concentration and the attendant growth of capital units. The progress of concentration has continued also the process of elimination of the old petty bourgeoisie, in production and services alike, as multitudes of "independent" entrepreneurs or their sons come to find themselves in the position of wage-workers, in fact if not in principle (with the notable exceptions of the professions of medicine and law, which have so far successfully staved off their reorganization on industrial lines, although this too is changing.) The white collar sector of the working class expanded also with the growth of governmental bureaucracy and service officers following on the growth of the public sector.

The reverse side of the simultaneous growth and relative deterioration of position of the white collar group has been the tremendous expansion of higher education (a continuation of the process whereby the Industrial Revolution first demanded quantities of uniformly skilled and therefore educated labor). This has affected the job aspect of the matter, as the enlargement of educational institutions to meet new needs obviously implies an increase in teaching and administrative personnel. But the more immediate impact on students came from the attendant reorganization and adaptation to new functions of the colleges. College is no longer merely a place for the acquisition of a "liberal education" and some necessary business skills for the young of the business elite, but has become largely a point of production of masses of the white collar labor needed by industry, government, and the school themselves, as even the "elite" universities have come to take on the character of the pioneer land grant colleges. The expansion of the college population and facilities made necessary the transformation of the institutions themselves from communities of young gentlemen and their mentors into bureaucratized structures, on the model of modern industry, processing huge numbers of students. At the same time the new needs of the economy which gave rise to the "multiversity" led to the addition to its educative functions of those of being service centers for both industry and government.

The dominant ideology promulgated by the university remained that of neo-liberalism, the classical doctrine with some alterations covering the advance of Keynesian economic policies: free enterprise with equal opportunity and reasonable success for all; freedom within the law made by a pluralist-democratic government of, by, and for the people; the ability of the welfare state to mitigate all social problems on the road to their final solution. The conflict between these values and the realities of modern capitalist society could only grow increasingly apparent to students, given by their very position of privilege an opportunity for some degree of critical examination of a world in which their future positions increasingly took on the character of a set of equally unsatisfying "slots"—especially when these realities included the likelihood of nuclear annihilation. Thus openly leftish political life returned to America with the largely student anti-bomb movement, reaching its first peak in the Washington demonstrations of 1961 which involved some 7,000 people.

The threat of future destruction quickly proved to be but the tip of an iceberg of daily catastrophe, with the "discovery" of poverty and the spotlight cast on racism by the rising activity of the civil rights movement. Here, too, students became deeply involved. SNCC was born out of the contradiction between the rising aspirations of black college students and the realities of the black man's position, in the context of the struggles led in the industrializing south so dramatically by Martin Luther King, Jr. Hundreds of "white liberal" students answer to call to join the attempt at (electoral) political organization of the blacks. The failure of "the Movement," due to the essential powerlessness of its rural base, progressively driven from a buyers' market for agricultural labor into urban employment, was experienced by the young organizers primarily in terms of the brutality of living conditions of the people they had come to aid, the clear demonstration of the class bias of governmental authority, and the total abdication of that bastion of liberalism, the Democratic Party, to the strength of the Dixiecrats.

The "end of ideology" was shattered beyond repair; or, more accurately, exposed as the triumph of ideology the concept had in fact represented. The new consciousness was indeed ambiguous, as rational responses to real social conditions were for the new left activists not transparent but only felt as such through the shroud of the liberal ideology. "The ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas"; they can be replaced by a true appreciation of social affairs only to the extent that class rule is challenged by a social force embodying the principle of a classless society. As we shall see, it is precisely the absence of such a force which has limited the ability of the new left to escape from the ideological spectacles of bourgeois society, and thus to see a way towards socialist revolution. It will not be necessary here to trace the development of the new left in any detail, but only to pick out the main trends.

II

Despite the fact that it has been primarily a student movement, the new left has by and large focussed its critique not so much on university life, its immediate social environment, as on capitalist society in general. The connection between the two has been made mostly in terms of the university's direct services to capitalism, rather than its general role in society and the internal consequences thereof. This has been both a strength and a weakness of the student movement. It has allowed for the elaboration of a critique of the society, of issues which do not confront the students in their daily activity but which were not raised outside this context; it has

also obscured the nature of the revolution which the new left has come to see is necessary and, thus, their potential part in it.

In part this characteristic of the student left has been due to the peculiar postition of students, who are not involved in the production process but are only in training for it. It is not without significance that student left activity has so far largely centered in the elite colleges, rather than in the junior and "community" institutions into which working class youth is channelled. For the latter, college represents a way out of factory labor and Dad's store to white collar and administrative jobs; whereas for "elite" students, the end of college represents not entrance into a better life but the ending of a freedom and enjoyment that has been theirs from birth.[1] It is also precisely the privileged status of these students that allows for a moral rejection of the power positions open to at least some of them; thus the rejection of working class life is joined by the reactivation of the liberal conscience.

It was with this, then, that the new left began, rather than with a conscious response to its own immediate situation. It was in the name of (bourgeois) humanity that the anti-bomb and civil rights movements developed. In the beginning, the social destruction wrought by capitalism was still seen in terms of "problems" to be solved to fulfill the promises—liberty, equality, fraternity—of the bourgeois revolution of the eighteenth century; the element of radicalism consisted largely in a readiness to work outside of more conventional political channels, although an ambivalent attitude towards the possibility of worthwhile work with the Democratic party survived in SDS until 1965. Then, as the experiences of participants in the movements mentioned led to a growing awareness of the nature of capitalism, the new left's politics remained largely those of involvement in movements of the "disadvantaged"—the blacks, the poor, (most recently) the workers. Throughout, the student radical saw his role not in terms of his actual social position but as that of a force, so to speak, outside of society, organizing those inside on their own behald.

There is one major open[2] exception to the pattern of the new left focus outside the university: the Berkeley revolt of 1964. Even here the seed came from involvement in the civil rights movement: The demand for free speech was raised by activists forbidden by the university administration to hand out their leaflets on campus. Yet, as Mario Savio put it, while the struggle for civil rights provided a "reservoir of outrage at the wrongs done to other people . . .such action usually masks the venting, by a more acceptable channel, of outrage at the wrongs done to oneself." To the extent that the Free Speech Movement quickly involved masses of students it expressed not so much the political preoccupations of the radicals as general student dissatisfaction with the nature of the "multiversity." Indeed, this applies too to all those campus revolts which attained numerical importance; though generally the radicals have succeeded in maintaining their demands as the apparent focus of activity.

Berkeley is thus an exception that proved the rule of student radicals' rejection of university issues as objects of concentrated effort. University reform has remained the purlieu of those whom the radicals derogate as liberals and in fact has generally remained a realm of committees and other forms of cooptation. Even in the brief period of the "student syndicalism" strategy in SDS, campaigning for student power was thought of largely as a tactic for getting students involved in confrontations with school and state authorities, which were expected to lead to student radicalization and transformation into movement activists.

Comparison with the European student left is interesting. in Germany, France, Italy, and quite recently in England, movements have developed in confrontation with the university institution directly. This was furthest developed in Germany, with a range of activities from the creation of the "critical university," a well organized attempt to work out a critique of and alterntive to the content of bourgeois education, to an attack on the forms of educational practice and structures of student life. The same sort of thing developed to varying degrees, in France and in Italy. At the same time, these movements never lost sight of the wider social context of student dissatisfaction, both in theory and agitation and in practice, so that the student mass base has become easily involved in working class action. Of course, the dilemma thought to exist by some US radicals, between concentration on "student power" and "class politics," poses no problem, because the university crisis is part and parcel of the general social crisis of capitalism. Thus the great moments of the French and Italian student movement were contained in mass strike movements; and indeed the relative fragmentation and powerlessness that has marked the French student left in the past year is a reflection of the low level to which the general class struggle has fallen back since May, 1968.

1. Interpreting the student left as a "middle class" refusal of its new proletarian status suggests a link with the hippy phenomenon. In the latter case, however, the refusal of proletarianism takes the form not of a demand for social change but of a simple rejection of the status quo. The practical impossibility of the latter response spells either attempted retreat into pre-capitalist lifeways, by moving to backward countries abroad or to the woods at home; insanity or death; or integration into capitalism in a way psychologically more acceptable. This has meant either the elaboration of a life of private sensibility in hours off from a "straight" job, or a sort of neo-petty bourgeois artisan/shopkeeper existence. To say this is *not* to criticize (e.g. as "petty bourgeois individualism") the use made by young people, in all classes, of the "youth culture" to express their budding rejection of work discipline, wealth/status goals, the concept of "career," and authoritarianism in general.

2. I leave out a class of quasi-exceptions: the many "black studies" movements, adaptations of the "black power" concept to the campus, which raise special problems for analysis.

What explains this contrast with the American case? Part of the answer lies in institutional differences between American higher education and its place in the respective societies. The European countries share an antiquated university structure, ill-adapted to the mass production of what is now called over optimistically the "knowledge factory." The failure to develop institutions capable of meeting the needs of a vastly increased student population, in everything from size of lecture rooms to financial aid, plus a serious unemployment problem for graduates in both natural and social sciences, has produced an intolerable strain. Thus mass student discontent has been generated both by overcrowded conditions and by attempts of the authorities to respond to this by cutting university enrollment.

Another difference between Europe and America is the absence in the latter of any real left wing intellectual or organizational tradition. Despite the ideological character of the "Marxism" of the European Communist and Socialist parties—which corresponds perfectly to their reformist practice—the original content of Marxism was still publicly available. This is one important factor of the European student left's conscious attempts to give new revolutionary content to the concept of communist revolution, that in Europe the "new left" has emerged out of a continuing "old left" experience and tradition through a confrontation on all levels with organizations and ideas that are real political and intellectual forces. Again the clearest case is that of the German SDS, which started as a youth group of the Social Democratic Party, splitting into serious radicalism after the parent organization formally abjured Marxism and joined the government: yet another confirmation of Marx's dictum on repetition in history, this betrayal being only the dullest farce after the tragedy of August, 1914. The parallel continues in the Germans' consequent rediscovery of the Sparticist and workers' council communist tradition.

Moreover, a radical tradition of another type has survived in Europe in the form of rank and file working class radicalism in opposition to the official "left" parties and unions. While this has achieved its clearest conscious expression only in small groups like Solidarity in England and ICO (Information Correspondence Ouvrieres) in France, it has evidenced itself strikingly in the vast labor upsurges of the May days in France, the Italian mass strikes of the last two years, and the continuously expanding deepening wildcat strike movement in England.

The USA, in contrast, has been distinguished for some time by the absence of a political working class and even nominally working class politics. There is in America no real analogue to the European old left organizations. The Communist Party has for decades been more or less a joke foisted upon us by the FBI. the Socialist Party has lacked even this notoriety; and the other little left wing parties and sects are yet more difficult to take seriously. (Progressive Labor can fairly be said to have acquired what midget importance it has only as a parasite on the new student movement.)

On the other hand, American history since the Civil War is marked by a series of waves of extremely militant spontaneous working class struggle, involving mass strikes and even insurrectional seizures of municipalities. Yet these have apparently left no permanent mark, except in the form of the growth of the trade unions—and even this has overflowed craft boundaries only since the twenties. It remains, or more correctly, is continually reborn in the proletarian discontent with the limits set to struggle by the unions, visible in extraordinary numbers of wildcat strikes and in rank and file pressure on the leadership for official strikes. Here, too, must be mentioned the activities of black caucuses and extra-union groups, in which black workers' consciousness of

their special oppression has come to raise issues of direct interest to all workers. So far, however, this discontent has remained localized and thus always susceptible in the end to union recapture of control.

It is in terms of this context that what I have called the liberalism of the student new left can be understood. Liberalism is generally thought of in simplistic terms; but is neither a simple not a static form of thought and action. As ever, the course of ideas is ruled by the concrete social development. The liberalism of the twentieth century is not that of the eighteenth and nineteenth. In capitalism's period of growth, the doctrine of *laissez-faire* served well in the battle against both the traditional ruling classes and the dispossessed peasantry and newborn "laboring poor." With the consolidation of the system, however, and then with its entry into its present period of decline, progressive practice and therefore ideology was that which dealt with the threat of social disruption through the official recognition and integration of the labor movement, on the one hand, and the interference of the State in "economic" affairs, on the other.[3]

The soul and body of this liberalism, represented in this country most outspokenly by the "left wing" of the Democratic Party, is reformism: the project of the overcoming of social contradictions without the abolition of the class relations which produce them. This can be a form of activity encouraged by an historical situation in which real social

3. This transformation is strikingly to be perceived in the difference in their relation to the State, between the pre-and post-Depression unions in America, the AFL and the CIO. The former adopted *laissez-faire* for its own device; in the midst of the Depression, its leeders declared their stand against State interference in labor-employer relations. The CIO, in contrast, developed almost as an arm of the New Deal government. The merger of the two unions only marked the triumph of the new principle.

progress is possible; or it can be the dissatisfying result of a situation in which revolution, though the necessary basis for social advance, is temporarily impossible. The former was the case of the "old left," the latter, so far, that of the "new". Obviously, the possibilities for the development of consciousness and action in the two cases will be quite different.

III

By speaking of the old left as "liberal", I mean not only to capitalize on a phraseology with definite meaning for the current left but also to emphasize the extent to which both of the main traditions falling under the former rubric—Social Democracy and Bolshevism—failed to challenge the roots of capitalist class relations. The Social Democratic parties and trade unions developed, despite their origin in proletarian oppositon to capital, as organs speaking for the working class within the evolving political and ecomonic frameworks of capitalism. The steady formation, with capitalist development, of a proletarian mass systematically oppressed necessitated the development of forms of integration of this mass—whose interest is essentially opposed to that of their rulers—into the system dominated by those rulers. This happened as soon as the regime of capitalist exploitation reached a scale making impossible the regulation of the class struggle on a general social level, under the control of the capitalist class as a whole. Political—parliamentary— representation allowed for the large-scale regulation and control of the conditions of exploitation; union organization developed procedures for the handling of grievances and the control of strikes—that ultimate weapon of the working class which in every case poses the question of the nature and control of social production.

Bolshevism represented and represents the adaptation of these functional forms of organization to the special conditions of backward areas. In Russia, the birthplace and classic example of Bolshevism, economic and social backwardness was tied to political backwardness (Tsarist absolutism); apparent on the horizon was a revolution which while advanced would share the basic character of the French revolution and the German upheavals of 1848, in which the dynamic of capitalist development would free itself from the fetters of a *regime* doubly *ancien*, by Europe's standards and Russia's. For the Russian Marxists, the situation was indedd a recapitulation of '48, only with every chance of success in the further evolved world of the 1900's. The socialist movement developing as an aspect of the growth of capitalism in Russia would have a double role to play: first, as vanguard in the struggle for bourgeois democracy, then in the class struggle which would accelerate with the unleashed capitalist progress.

While the ultimate model for the organization of the Russian labor movement was the German Social Democracy and its associated trade unions, the bottleneck character of the Russian situation made a mass social democratic organization a practical impossibility. Bourgeois reformism was out of the question when the bourgeois revolution was still to come (and indeed, reformist gains were made in Russia—as, curiously enough, in the USA—only through mass unorganized insurrectional activity).

This was part of Lenin's accurate perception of the situation expounded in *What is to be Done?* The spontaneous class struggle, he held, (trade unionist in aims) was not adequate to the tasks imposed by the Russian situation. The accomplishment of revolution—first of all the bourgeois revolution—could not be entrusted to the workers, but required an organization of professional revolutionists, able in their isolation from the daily struggle of capital and labor to keep their eyes on the main question: the bourgeois revolution which, by offering the Party a chance to seize power, would open the way to socialism.

The similarities and contrasts between Social Democracy and Bolshevism are equally significant. In the one case reform, in the other revolution. But the basic idea is the same: Socialism was to be achieved through control of the state by the party which, as the guardian of Marxist theory, was the true representative of the workers (or, as the doctrine had to be expanded under the press of events, the workers and peasants). This basic idea was fleshed both in the reformist practice of the SPD and in the revolutionary activity of Lenin's party. The difference stemmed out from varying conceptions of the relation of the proletariat to socialism but from the difference between the socio-political contexts of the two groups, which in both cases favor a hierarchal party structure presaging the form of the ultimate seizure of power. Hence it was natural—despite the gulf which otherwise opened between the two leaders—for Lenin to quote Kautsky with approbation in his attack on "spontaneity," which Lenin identified with the trade unionist, bread-and-butter character of the labor movement. He found "profoundly true and important" Kautsky's opinion that

> . . . socialist consciousness appears to be a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue . . . Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge . . . The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois *intelligentsia*.[4]

Lenin summed up in his own memorable words:

> . . . *there could not yet be* social democratic (i.e., later, bolshevist communist) consciousness among the workers. This consciousness could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own efforts, is able to develop only trade union consciousness . . . The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the . . . theories that were elaborated by . . . the intellectuals.[5]

But whereas in Germany the ideology of the Party as carrier of the consciousness "of" the class suited a party which acted in fact as the liberal, progressive force in German capitalism, in Russia the vanguard concept expressed an historical movement towards the very replacement of the bourgeoisie by the Party.

Ideology, because the supposition that revolutionary consciousness is impossible except as incarnated in the controlling leadership of the intellectuals organized in the

4. Cited in *What is to be Done?*. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol. I (International Publishers, 1967), p. 129.

5. *Ibid.* This, ironically, only two years before the unorganized revolutionary upsurge of 1905, with the formation of the first workers' soviets.

Party, proved false in Germany and Russia alike, as well as in all the areas in which the capitalist crisis of 1913-1920 drove the workers to revolt. The German revolution, which developing in fact in opposition to the SPD, created its own form of organization in the workers' councils directing the factory occupations, only destroying itself when it handed power back to the Socialist Party, which the experience of the the previous fifty years had led the workers to think of as representatives who once in power would make socialism for them. In Russia, the professional revolutionists of the Bolshevik Party rose to power through *their* support of the *masses' demands.* If the "correct Marxist-Leninst line' in 1917 was "All power to the soviets!" it was only because the workers of Petrograd had already created the soviets (councils), as they had before in 1905. The Bolshevik seizure of power, in the absence of successful proletarian revolution in the West, was not the completion of the revolutionary process but the beginning of its end. The substitution of a coup d'etat, even by socialists and even on the basis of worker-peasant support, for the direct seizure of the means of production by the workers themselves, meant inevitably the doom of the effective power of the soviets and the replacement of the dictatorship of by a dictatorship over the proletariat.

That the revolutionary character of the Bolshevik Party was due to its situation in a backward country and not to the strength of the revolutionary will is shown clearly by the fate of the Communist parties organized in Western Europe under the aegis of the Third International. Their parliamentarism and reformism resulted not only from their subjection to the needs of Soviet foreign policy but also from their adaptation to conditions of a revived capitalism.[6] Today, the mass Communist parties and unions in Italy and France have the place of the social democratic organizations of former times; the "mature" tactics of Leninism-for-the-West bearing their finest fruit in the systematic sabotage of the May, 1968 revolt by the French CP.[7] The failure of the "old left" organizations to develop in the USA during and after the Great Depression may be traced indeed to the fact that the Democratic government and the trade unions filled the role played in Europe by "socialist" labor organizations. It is just the latter's place, with modifications stemming from the pecularities of US history, which was taken by those political forces proud to call themselves "liberal."

In this historical light, the task conceived by those fragments of the new left who dream of a revival of revolutionary Leninism in the developed countries acquires a clearer (if dismal) character.

The liberal roots of the new left show up in the centrality which the concept of the professional leftist has had here from the beginning. After the example of trade unionists and social workers, the student activists conceived of themselves and acted as *organizers*—the ideal being to "go full-time"—rather than as "fellow students" or workers with a somewhat clearer idea of their condition. From the civil rights movement through the community organizing projects of the middle sixties to the campus politics to which the students keep being reduced (surprise!), the "organizer model" of left activity has reigned supreme.

This model has corresponded to the developing liberal ideology—first social democratic, then bolshevik—which derived first from the illusion that there remained real possibilities of significant reform and then from the fact that students as a group are powerless to change the society against which they react. The new left quickly ran through the system's channels. Neither electoral politics, moral witness, nor pressure groups of the poor succeeded in winning anything of value.[8] This experience forced the recognition of the necessity for popular—i.e., working class—revolution to put an end to the abuses of human life whose systematic interconnection came (at the same time) into clearer view. But without the existence of a proletarian left movement, this perspective leads to an apparent dead end. The result has been the transmutation of "liberals" into "revolutionaries" of Leninist persuasion.

This ideological trend is of course the result of more than the psychological development of some new leftists. The continuing strength of liberalism derives from capitalism's constant tendency to "rationalization." This derives from the nature of capitalist development, which expresses itself both in economic reorganization (concentration of capital, search for efficiency within the plant) and in the necessity of overcoming a tendency towards social instability, in periods in which the status quo no longer meets the needs imposed on the system by its own logic.

The economic and social system built by the Bolsheviks in Russia, in which the Party-State takes the place of the capitalist class as a whole, is the logical end-point of the trend to concentration of capital and government interference in the economy which define the "mixed economy" of the West. From this point of view, the revival of Leninism (and—somewhat surprisingly, though logically enough—of Stalinism) perhaps represents in part the chafing of the bourgeoisie at the limitations placed on further development towards state-capitalism by the remaining private-property character of the economy.[9] It is thus related to the myth of the technocratic class, whose approach to power is alternatively welcomed (e.g., by Galbraith) or feared (e.g., by Chomsky).

6. In the case of Germany, where the continuing crisis was resolved only by fascism, the success of this adaptation was not so striking; those who quote Lenin's polemic against *Leftwing Communism, an Infantile Disorder* as the last word on political and trade union strategy tend to be silent on the connection between the Leninist policy and the triumph of Nazism.

7. A more tragic example was the aggressively counter-revolutionary policy of the Spanish CP, on whose forceful destruction of the Spanish Revolution of 1936 lies much of the responsibility for Franco's victory over communism and bourgeois democracy alike. This episode is well though briefly described in Noam Chomsky's "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship", (ch. 1 of *American Power and the New Mandarins*) an excellent study of the essential unity of liberalism and bolshevism.

8. See Richie Rothstein's very good study of SDS' community organizing, "Evolution of the ERAP Organizers," in P. Long, ed. *The New Left*. Boston, 1964.

9. "Whether they like it or not, they (PL) are not Marxists. They belong to an international bureaucracy which is already in power." *I Accuse Harvard University*, pamplet available from Supak, MIT Branch P.O., Box 233, Cambridge, Mass.

At any rate, the bolshevist idea appeals to a frustrated intelligentsia, hardly approaching power in fact, who see before them the successes and struggles of the ambitious intelligentsia of the Third World for whom nationalist movements, under the guidance of Marxist-Leninist parties, are an avenue to power.[10] Certainly for those living in an imperialist rather than a colonized country, the Leninist perspective leads of necessity to idolization of Third World revolutionary leaders—Fidel, Che, Mao, Ho Chih Minh (not to mention Enver Hoxha). This identification of the goals of the American left with those of nationalist and state-capitalist movements in the underdeveloped world, itself again a reflection of the weakness of the US left, revives the Leninist conception of the worldwide unity of anti-imperialist forces. Just as in Russia, the theory ran, socialism could be established in an overwhelmingly peasant country due to the control of the state by the Communist Party, representative of the workers, so the anti-colonial movements would combine with the labor movements of the West to make the world revolution, thanks to the unifying guidance exercised all over by the Communist International controlled by the Russian bolsheviks. The experiences of the last fifty years should have been enough to dispel this myth from leftist minds, as national liberation has proved to mean either "neocolonialism," or else exploitation of the masses of the Third World by state capitalist masters, generally involving in either case the reincorporation (to varying degrees) of the "liberated" countries into new empires, Russia and America dividing the spoils. Even the most "neutralist" of the new nations (i.e., those which seek to play the various masters of the world off against each other) have no choice but to adapt themselves to the exigencies of the world market, controlled by the industrially advanced countries.

10. There is here a parallel with Black Power's frequent identification with the masters of emerging African and Asian states.

At this point, the prospect of total statification of American capitalism is a dim one. There is no faction of the bourgeoisie with access to political power not dedicated to the preservation of private corporate power. And the working class has a healthy antipathy to "communism" of the Russian or Chinese type, which they rightly identify as totalitarian control of the individual's existence (despite the fact that, due to their non-comprehension of the fact that individuals are members of classes, their "anticommunism" takes the insane form of support for free enterprise). Even among their fellow students the new Leninists have been unable to attract a significant following.

The new left came into existence because the old left liberalism, in which social democratic reformism and bolshevist revolutionism converge in advanced capitalism, is no longer feasible. While the state-capitalization of American society cnanot be ruled out as an option which the bourgeoisie might choose at the sacrifice of their private interests in order to avoid economic collapse and the threat of revolution from below, at the moment the more significant—as well as only really revolutionary-avenue visible in the future of capitalism is that of a truly communist evolution, organized and controlled by the working class itself. It is for us more crucial now than ever to get beyond the ideologies of the past to an understanding of the nature of working class consciousness and action. This alone will provide a key to comprehension of the possibilities of the new left.

IV

The uniqueness of capitalism in the history of human society lies in its development of social integration to a point where the overcoming of the opposition of individual to social interests becomes for the first time imaginable. The basis of any society is the production (and distribution) of all the goods that satisfy its members' wants—from food and clothing and material means of production themselves to the arts and to all the systems of ideas with which societies attempt to understand themselves and maintain belief in the worthiness of the ways of life they represent. In all pre-capitalist societies, most of this work of production was carried out on an individual or narrowly local basis. Though the steady growth of cities as a form of civilized existence made for the development of a division of labor between the work of the town and that of the country, most people worked directly for themselves, their families, their village communities, or their immediate overlords. Hunters, farmers, artisans largely made their own tools; families provided their own homes, clothes, and nourishment; not only tribute but trade moved the products of specialized labor only for the few.

Capitalism has changed all that. The transformation of peasant or freehold agricultural production into large-scale farming by wage-labor for the market and the development of mass-production industry have bound the producers economically—and so socially—not only to those who hold social power but to each other. This is true for both aspects of the unity of production-distribution. An auto worker labors with thousands of others in the manufacture of a common product; and this product is as little for his own or his

colleagues' specific use as is the bread they eat produced by them. Common labor at the point of production is but the cell-form of a system of common production by all the workers in society for each other.

At the same time, this social system of production developed historically under the control of private ownership and control of the means, and therefore of the results, of production. Labor took the form of wage-labor; people produce for each other only by producing for the capitalists from whom they must then buy back their own products. Thus social production has developed in capitalism at the expense of the producers, who can work only for themselves—each other—by working for the masters of the process.

The needs of the producers can be met, due to this peculiar system of social production under private control, only through the mechanism of the market, including and based upon their submission to the labor market. The private aspect of this system dominates the communal: Instead of being controlled consciously by the joint producers, production is controlled by the market; and the market, by the need of private capital to competitively accumulate. Thus arise all the anomalies, ridiculous and tragic, characteristic of this system: from the careful designing of lightbulbs that burn out faster to the "overproduction" of food while millions starve. Inevitably, such a system leads to conflicts between the needs of the producers and the capacity of the system to satisfy them, its periods of apparent success leading only to crises throwing millions out of work or into war.

It is no surprise, then, that from its origins opposition to capitalism developed as an integral part of capitalist society itself. From the beginning it has been a class society in which the interests of the class of producers, production for the "cooperative commonwealth," and those of the class of owners and exploiters, the amassing of profit and the expansion of their individual power, came constantly (though sometimes more clearly than at others) into opposition to each other. From the revolts of the weavers of Ghent in 13th century Flanders to the wildcat strikes and student revolts today capitalism has been marked by the struggle of the society of cooperative producers to liberate itself from the private control of its exploiters.

Thus the content of class consciousness follows from the nature of the class. For the proletariat it means the class's awareness of itself as socially organized labor, which at the same time is not identical with capitalist "society as a whole" but is a *class*, a group with its own interests in conflict with those of other classes in a society ruled by another class, that of the capitalists. In this way, working class consciousness is inherently historically active: For consciousness of an actual state of affairs as something to be changed cannot be simple "consciousness" but must be a dialectic of consciousness and revolutionary action. Revolutionary class consciousness at once gives rise to and arises out of revolutionary class activity, which is equally two-sided: In such activity revolt against the capitalist conditions of work may extend in a natural way to the reorganization of society on the basis of a new mode of production and distribution. Above all, the point is that consciousness and activity are not two things but one: The class struggle is the *conscious activity* of the class.

All this is too abstract and "philosophical"; but it is only an attempt to condense what we find in the concrete history of the socialist movement. Major working class activity has not been the creation of "organizers" either *ex nihilo* or by the infusion of a "good political line" into the trade union sort of activity. Rather, an examination of past movements reveals a history of revolutionary activity as working class transcendence of workaday militance in the face of social crisis conditions which transform reformist and integrative movements willy-nilly into revolutionary ones. Reformism is not a doctrine foisted on the workers by bad leaders, but a product of the workers' willingness to be satisfied with the gains obtainable in progressive periods of capitalism. The basis of revolutionary activity is the system's inability to achieve permanent stability, its tendency thus to create situations in which the institutions—unions, political parties—that under "normal" conditions channel and contain working class dissatisfactions can no longer function. In such situations the working class is forced to find new forms of organized activity in its struggle against capital.

If the thought of the party (or its chairman) is no substitute for the consciousness of the masses, neither is its organization a substitute for theirs. Organization is the organization of activity and so grows out of and reflects its needs. Tactics can obviously be worked out only in terms of the specific shapes taken on by the struggle in specific situations and are nothing to be determined by a central committee, although interchange of experiences between workers in different areas is so important as to be essential. The same goes for strategy; the cleverest strategies "for the working class" mean nothing if they do not correspond to needs felt by the workers as produced by their own activity. It should be clear that what is at issue here is not "centralism versus decentralism," but rather the relation between local groups and the center. What is crucial is, on the one hand, the freedom of the locals to devise actions responsive to their situations and, on the other, strict control of all supra-local organization by the locals, so that the center is only a tool of the locals. Such centralism—coordination of local struggles—becomes possible as soon as it becomes necessary, i.e., as soon as the bourgeoisie is confronted on a large scale, is confronted as a class. For this means that the various groups of producers in struggle are fighting on a common basis, in which case it is the simplest and most natural matter to extend the organization of the workplace to that of several workplaces, of a region, of a country, of the world.

The fact is that the workers are, as we have seen already and at all times organized: in the factory, the office, the school, the neighborhood. The core of the communist revolution is the workers' taking this organization out of the hands of the bosses and into their own. For instance, had the general strike in France in May '68 continued, the factories would have had to be started up again—even if at first only for the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the population—only now under the control of the workers; so that the strike committee elected in the plants would have had to transform themselves into workers' councils administering production, organizing armed defence for the premises, communications, etc. In this way the workplace council of deputies elected and recallable by all who work there becomes the organizational unit of the new, communist order of society.

The organization of the working class as a class, capable of taking power, is thus the product of the development of capitalism. "The new society issues from the womb of the

old." The party, on the other hand, is (to use Gransci's word) a voluntary organization, a union of people who share a common program and conception of the fight for socialism. While parties are unable—as a matter not of theory but of fact—to direct the struggle for the working class, they can indeed devise strategies and tactics for the realization of their own ends. This is not to say that those ends must be in conflict with those of the workers as a class, but only that a *socialist* (or communist) party, as a group which recognizes that the socialist movement "reckons, in all its phases and through its entire course, on the organization and direct, independent action of the masses" (Rosa Luxemburg), must have for end not *its* seizure of power, but the workers'. Its aim must be at all times none other than the development of the autonomy of the workers' activity.

V

We have seen that this was not the character of the "old left," in both its social democratic and bolshevist forms. Born in the period of capitalist expansion, the old labor movement was not capable of being a left at all, if we understand by "left" a movement for the overthrow of bourgeois society. With the end of that expansion and capitalism's entrance into aperiod which may well be described as one of permanent crisis, the old movement died—and a new, revolutionary one became possible. The weakness of the new left's theory and organizational practice has been not to understand this; thus it came to reproduce (in a rather unsophisticated form) the ideas and forms of organization of a labor movement which can no longer exist, and which did not pose an alternative to class society when it did exist.

On the other hand, the new left started with an attempt to reject the ideologies of the past. This has found expression in the positive attitudes which have emerged from our vague criticisms of the old: "participatory democracy," "let the people decide." It is even, I believe, at the root of the confused sympathy of many for the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and for the particular shape which a leader-directed revolution has taken on in Cuba.

In practice the student left—despite the political organizer ideology with which it tried to understand itself—had displayed the character of an element of a nascent social movement. Despite the claims made by radical leaders to have "organized" student revolts around political issues—racism, the war—calling for student "service to the people," the large-scale uprisings like those at Berkeley, Columbia, Harvard, S.F. State drew their power from the expression of student frustration with the institutions through which *they* experienced the capitalist society against whose most flagrant abominations this power was focussed. Thus mass student involvement has typically come in response to the entrance of police on campus, rather than to the original "issue." (As the International Werewolf Conspiracy put it in a leaflet at Berkeley, *"the issue is not the issue."*) Above all, the radical character of the new left is visible in its favorite tactics, forced on it by the failure of liberal institutions: those of mass, direct action (even when the goal to be attained was imagined in terms of parliamentary politics), and in the inability of the new "true Marxist-Leninist parties" to attract many recruits.

The existence of such a spirit bears witness to a real possibility of an expansion and deepening of the left movement in the near future. The ferment which was at first to be discovered only among college students has spread throughout the young of the population (a N.Y. *Times* survey revealed that in 1968 three out of five high and junior high schools experienced some significant disruption from their students). And the "rank and file revolt" against the unions has continued to grow. In a way, the very absence of a left labor organizational tradition favors the development of a radical workers' movement in America in the future. The old political forms, which become fetters on the development of the struggle, do not have to be destroyed where they do not exist.

A special word is in order here in reference to the anti-racist movement among the blacks. Racial discrimination, particularly in the form of permanent confinement of masses of blacks to the reserve army of the unemployed, seems to be ineradicable within the confines of American capitalism. At the same time, without the activity of a proletarian left cutting across racial lines, no solutions are possible for the blacks except within those confines. Caught on the horns of this dilemma, the black movement has continually swung between integrationist and separatist poles of attraction. In this circumstance is to be found the solution to the paradoxical combination, in a group like the Black Panthers, of a "reformist" social work practice and a (Leninist) revolutionary phraseology. In this case we encounter again the attempt to reproduce in America political forms appropriate only to the Third World. Despite the similarity of the blacks' position to that of a colonized "people," the idea of "black national liberation" has no practical significance whatsoever. The impossiblility of bolshevist solutions to the problems facing the American working class condemns black efforts in this direction, like those of the white Leninists, to failure—a failure, in the case of the former, involving systematic extermination.

The development of the black movement has, however, been of enormous importance. Much of the campus revolt has been stimulated by or consisted entirely in black student participation in the fight against racism. Despite the often unimpressive character, from a radical point of view, of the calls for "black culture" courses and degrees, black students have, in demanding some say about their education, raised issues—the issue—valid for all students. In the last analysis, the demand for control of education implies a demand for abolition of a society which requires a certain type of education. In the same way, the fight against victimization by foremen and union officials and against speedup by various black workers' groups is one which must eventually involve all workers. Since the special oppression of the black man can be ended only with the abolition of capitalism, the black movement, despite the separatist character forced upon it by the failure of the whites to act, will ultimately prove a part of the struggle for communist revolution.

In the context of an active workers' movement, the role of students in capitalist society and in the struggle against it will become clearer. The students cannot "serve" the workers, who alone, by taking over their workplaces, can liberate themselves. On the other hand, only socialist revolution will give "student power" or the goal of student/staff control over the university

any radical meaning, though of course this will also mean the dissolution of the forms of education which exist and their replacement by forms—involving, for instance, the end of the distinction between "worker" and "student"—appropriate to a society in which "the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all."

* * *

The meaning of the "paradox" with which we began may now perhaps be clearer. The organizational collapse of the new left represents just the collapse of old forms of activity which no longer have practical validity. The new left itself, as a social movement, remains; it is now faced with the task of finding new modes of thought and action appropriate to its needs.

It is clear what these do not involve. That vanguard parties "serving the people" are not counterrevolutionary only because they are doomed to failure should be evident by now. Likewise, the old idea that socialist forces can be accumulated in mass organizations in preparation for the revolutionary moment has been exploded by the history of the labor movement. Reformism does not lead to revolution, and today even reformism is impossible. The metamorphosis of this idea in the warmed-up form of the "transitional program" so perpetually dear to Trotskyites is as pointless as that of the more stylish "revolutionary reformism." The workers cannot be tricked by the radicals into a gradual progress towards the socialist idea. Revolutionary consciousness can arise only out of the inability of the system to satisfy people's own desires, out of a situation in which the demands the situation itself compels cannot be met.

Just as the key to mass radicalism does not lie in the construction of new "mass" organizations, so it is not to be found in the infiltration of the old. The trade unions, as institutions for bargaining over the price of labor-power, cannot simultaneously be vehicles for attack on the regime of wage-labor itself. Further, attempts either to form rival unions or to transform the existing ones from within have no chance against the bureaucracies which control their funds and organizational structure, and which are protected against subversion by the State.

What, then, is to be done? The answer to this question will be provided only out of the experience of all segments of the movement, and will require much study, discussion, and experiments in practice on the part of all radical groups. At this point only general direction can be clear.

Socialist groups—of workers, students, or both together—have a double role to play. A prime function for such groups must be education: achievement and propagation of an understanding of the nature of capitalism and the possibilities for socialism in our time; collection and circulation of information about the struggle as it unfolds on local, national, and international levels.

But radical consciousness means an understanding of capitalism not only as a system but as a system which can be challenged. Thus socialists have the task of helping their fellows overcome the passivity which allows their current fate to be perpetuated. This means not so much "organizing the masses" as aiding the development of a sense of autonomous power and activity among those with whom we work and live, which implies a constant struggle against any tendency to substitute the activity of the organization for the activity of those to whom we would speak. Here theory and practice come together: the function of socialist groups (as *Solidarity* puts it),

> is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalise their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and of its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed.

review

The American Working Class in Transition
by Kim Moody

Mimeo, published by the International Socialists.

Kim Moody has written an intelligent and comprehensive discussion of the changing structure of the American working class. His material points, particularly, to increasing government employment and concomitant state dependence of United States capitalism. One can take issue, however, with specific statements. According to Moody, for example, "the increased emphasis on education" in recent decades "is an attempt to increase the mobility of labor."(p.9) This statement is in part true, particularly in view of the fact that

> Automation is particularly applicable to clerical work and, as with production automation, tends to drastically displace the less skilled jobs without offering much potential for skill upgrading among those displaced (p. 7).

Whether education, or lack of it, determines mobility, however, is problematic. If it were otherwise, there might actually be some learning going on in the schools. In fact, requisite skills for employment are acquired in fewer than the required years of schooling. Schools function more importantly to keep youth off the streets, in controlled environments, putatively educational. That is, the state keeps occupied in school those for whom private industry has no immediate use.

In general, what Moody depicts in this work is compatible with what Paul Mattick has called the "inflationary depression" of present day Western, and particularly United States, capitalism. Whereas, according to Mattick,

> In a deflationary depression, production declines because part of the producible commodities cannot be sold profitably, thus preventing the realization of profits and their transformation into additional capital; . . .in an inflationary depression production continues, despite its lack of profitability, by way of credit expansion. (Marx and Kaynes: *The Limits of the Mixed Economy. Boston. 1969, p. 186)*

Production, and employment, expand; but it is not an extension of capital, of profit-generating production. One would assume, therefore, that the growing sectors of employment would be those sectors which are least productive and most vulnerable to fluctuations of the market. That the most rapidly expanding sectors of the work force in fact have been government, service, and financial workers confirms this thesis. One can note, for example, the large percentage—29.4%—of scientists and engineers working in "management, sales, service and other functions."(p.5) Indeed, the recent recessionary trend beginning in the fall of 1969 witnessed layoffs of corporate white collar workers as well as workers in the arms economy. Although blue collar workers are also being layed off, workers in the growth sectors of the economy can be laid off in large numbers with little effect on production.

Because Kim Moody does not draw this conclusion—and perhaps does not share it—he does not deal with its implications. He believes that the problems confronting the American working class are simply more of the same. More inflation, more taxation, more deterioration of living and working conditions. Perhaps. But it is also true that due to vulnerable structure the American working class is liable to sudden and drastic dislocations and to unemployment.

Although the bulk of the pamphlet is concerned, directly or indirectly, with labor unions, no clear perspective on them emerges. All the evidence is against them. Their racism apart, the unions are exposed as institutions which oppose the workers both in particular and in general struggles. The New York *Times* is correct when it declares that

> The leaders of labor have as great a stake as any public official in stemming the spirit of anarchy that underlies the postal revolt. (March 23,1970)

The unions sell labor peace. If they *cannot* sell it, they cannot remain in business.

> The nearly total divorce of the international [union] leadership from the control of the membership . . .lay in the structural changes that took place during the period o low membership participation ffrom 1950 to 1955. These changes include the lenghtening of the period between international conventions, increases in appointed positions . . .the introduction of more difficult criteria for holding international office, and the growth of power of the staff and top leaders over the financial resources of the union. By the middle of the 1950's it was virtually impossible for anything less then a massive upheaval to displace the international leadership. Given this bureaucratic structure, the national contract became a source of power in itself, in that the international leadership had the power to decide which issues to push and which groups to placate. (p.17)

According to Moody, then, there is nothing inherent in union structure which makes bureaucracy inevitable. Rather, one must suppose that an essentially democratic structure, which was an expression of rank and file wishes, "degenerated" into a bureaucratic structure, remote from the rank and file. The cause of the "degeneration"' is not clearly explained. Moody suggests certain "objective conditions" which may have been responsible for this "structural change."

> To a certain degree the increased power of the international leadership grew out of the need [whose need?] to meet industry on its own terms, i.e. on the basis of concentrated, centralized national power. (ibid)

Whether or not the author approves of the increased power of the national leadership, the fact remains that despite increased industrial centralization within the last thirty years, since the formation of the CIO, there has been no change of sufficient moment in the structure of industry to demand increased centralization of unions.

The cause of the "degeneration" of the unions seems, rather, to Kim Moody, to be the "low membership participation from 1950 to 1955." The increased standard of living of the post-war period

> meant that workers could well afford to let the union leaders conduct union affairs as they saw fit. (p.14)

Although the unions have worsened undeniably in the last thirty years, it is important to understand they have not changed fundamentally. Despite the degree of membership "participation" at any time, the rank and file always stood in

more or less the same relation to the leadership: It was forced to accept, that is, the latter's decisions, until such time as, perhaps a new leadership could be elected, which, in turn, would make the decisions to which the membership could respond. From the beginning, "the national contract became a source of power in itself" with which the national leadership could manipulate the international union.

> Moody notes that the CIO . . .was born of a political deal: first Section 7A of NRA and then the Wagner Act, in return for which the CIO leadership offered its political support to Roosevelt . . .(p.15)

More to the point, the purpose of the CIO was not, contrary to Moody, "the finance and coordination" of the

> massive upheaval in the new mass production industries that began in the early 1930's (ibid.)

but rather the control of that movement by institutions responsible to the ruling powers. As Georges Sorel noted, in reference to the French socialists of the first decade of this century,

> As long as there are no very rich and strongly centralised trade unions whose leaders are in continuous relationship with political men, so long will it be impossible to say exactly to what lengths violence [workers revolt] will go. Jaures [read Lewis, Reuther, or any other important union leader] would very much like to see such associations of workers in existence, for his prestige will disappear at once when the general public perceives that he is not in a position to moderate revolution. (*Reflections on Violence*, New York, 1967, p. 82)

This remark describes the CIO exactly.

To be sure, the workers fought massive and militant struggles to establish the unions against the corporations. The latter wished to keep the old, paternalist forms of control which had been appropriate to an earlier day. What is at issue, however, is not the *fact* of a militant workers' movement, but its result. The aim of the great labor struggles of the 1930's was simply union recognition, through dues checkoff, which immediately guaranteed the divorce of the international leadership from the membership and/or through a negotiated contract, which established certain minimal standards for workers. Presumably, the workers believed that once unions were established there would be regular channels through which to settle their grievances. The issue of the hard struggle would be the easy road ahead. But there was no easy road.

To be sure, the union won definite advantages for the workers; and, particularly, as time went on, for skilled and older worker. But for the minor advantages which they won, the workers paid a much heavier price: Unions became disciplinary agents of industry. After the organizing struggles of the 1930's came the World War. The unions immediately repaid their political masters many times over, organizing and disciplining the workers for the war effort. When, after the war, the massive strike wave of the 1930's was resumed, the unions succeeded in channeling the militant revolt into acceptable channels.

According to the author,

> From a guarantee of basic rights, labor legislation has turned into a means of state reinforcement of industrial stability and corporation planning. (p. 16)

But the Wagner Act had already "prescribed the manner in which labor is expected to behave." Again we find that no actual "transformation" has taken place, merely the worsening of an existing evil. The purpose of the government's "political deal" in the formation of the CIO was not merely to win political support for Roosevelt, but, much more importantly, to stabilize a volatile working class for corporations and state to manipulate. The unions have thus far served their purpose.

Within the general context of class harmony, the prescribed area of conflict has been wages and related issues, such as pensions and social insurance. Although bitter conflicts have frequently preceded negotiations on these issues, combat is mostly ritual. And, ultimately, the hatred of the workers is channeled into acceptable forms. Official strikes, however, are more than mere shows: Corporations genuinely wish to keep wages down, and unions genuinely attempt to use strikes to gain certain minor advantages for the workers. But, when all is said and done, official strikes have been indispensable for the maintenance of class peace in the United States. The result is the stable wage contract: for corporate planners, indispensable; for workers, inadequate. (Workers must accept a result of their own "free choice", i.e., the union contract.) The fringe benefits are used as "golden chains" the term Marx once used for high wages, which bind the workers not merely to capital, but to individual capitalists, because advantages accrue when workers remain in one shop throughout their working life.

The union's self-proclaimed purpose is the protection of the workers' income. The union abhors, moreover, all issues, like working conditions, in which workers have a more or less equal interest. Wages and fringe benefits are used to divide the workers who enjoy different benefits in different categories,

which are rigidly defined because of union insistence. The solidarity of labor is thus violated by the very purpose of the labor union, which reduces the worker to his wage packet. This is not to say that defense of the workers' income is not necessary. But the labor union defines this goal to be its sole concern. In the same way, the problem with reformism is not that it fights for reforms, but that it limits the struggle to the fight for reforms, reforms from which different workers benefit to different degrees. The labor union not only accepts the hierarchical structure of industry, and the atomic division of workers from one another, but also reinforces these tendencies in order to win certain advantages by defending the positions of privileged workers. No union attacks the principle of rigid job stratification and sharp pay differences. On the contrary, it builds its power base upon this division. This division is the basis in industry not only for racism but also for fragmentation of industrial consciousness among workers, each of whom is interested only in his own category.

Although it is true that

> Struggle in one's immediate self-interest, by both blacks and whites, is a necessary step in unfolding this dynamic [of working class struggle] (p. 40)

in order for the struggle to advance, even these limited struggles must begin to break down those barriers implicit in the concept of "one's immediate self-interest." This means demanding not that workers give up their "white skin privilege," but that they acknowledge the necessity to raise the living standards of black, and other white, workers commensurate at least with their own. The development of a general class struggle, which breaks down the barriers between workers, locally and industrially as well as racially, is not a mere result of the sum of many militant industrial struggles. We have already had more than five years of such struggles, with increasing militancy, over such issues as wages and even job conditions. What is needed is a change of *content*, even in the "struggle in one's immediate self-interest," which attacks directly the stratification of workers. It is a fact, as Kim Moody admits, that the better off and white workers genuinely benefit from the degradation of the worse off and black workers. The hierarchical stratification of workers, which makes possible the racial stratification, must be attacked directly—and abolished to the extent possible. At the very least, its abolition must be a focus of the struggle. Demands for higher wages put forward in order that workers in higher job categories keep their distance from other workers should be counterposed to the greatest possible equalization of wages and general increase within that context. Until the idea that workers in different categories, serving different lengths of time in industry, should have different privileges and wages is undermined, particular struggles, no matter how militant, can never become a class struggle. These roadblocks must be attacked head-on. Rotation of work duties, preferred and despised, should be an aim of militant factory groups. Ending industrial hierarchy should be a focal point of individual struggles for immediate self-interest. For only then can immediate self-interest give way to class consciousness.

The labor unions are the major roadblocks to working class struggle today. The forward movement of the workers can proceed only over the discarded carcass of the unions. As the workers' movement develops, the unions, with their immense financial investment in industrial peace, will not step to the side lines to welcome the new forms appropriate to the class struggle. Rather they will protect their own interests and attempt to effect the policies for which they were designed. The illusion of the labor unions and the labor contract as instruments of the workers must be counterposed to the necessity of *an entirely unofficial class struggle*. The labor contract must be opposed in principle, for its very existence rests upon the illusion of harmony of interests between capital and labor. In essence the contract commits the workers to refrain from struggle provided its conditions are met. It is in turn the formal basis of the labor union, both in the minor advantages which it brings to some workers, and in the major advantage which it brings in industrial peace to the employers. Whereas the workers may actually believe, at least for a time, in the possibilities of mediation, capital always engages in direct action. That is, there is no mediation between its decisions and their effects. The workers must adopt direct action as well.

However antagonistic Kim Moody's attitude toward the unions is, it is also ambiguous.

> It is clear, because of bureaucratism, the managerial nature of contract administration, and the web of state controls, that the unions cannot be the vehicle for

further development of the class struggle: That is, the unions, because they are unions, cannot be such a vehicle. Yet, he continues,

> It must be recognized that rank and file rebellion, while unable to gain direct sources of power, has had an effect on the unions. The bureaucratic monolith that was the AFL-CIO had been broken with the formation of the Alliance for Labor Action by the UAW and Teamsters.

Whereas there is no reason to believe that these unions will change in any way

> the mere fact of a break of this sort changes the political atmosphere and legitimizes new kinds of movements. (p. 42)

In other words, the great "contribution" of the unions is that the rank and file movements *against* them have created an atmosphere for the development of more rank and file movements. But nothing is said about the unions themselves, which despite minor shifts in attempts to, as Moody admits, "coopt rank and file rebellion, remain unchanged.

Even though the unions cannot be changed

> the union is a natural focus for political action within the industry. Political campaigns within the union can be, in some circumstances, a means for politicizing shop struggles. In this context, and unlike most union election campaigns in the past, the union becomes more an arena for action than the goal of the campaign.(p.42)

But, in that case, even though it may be "more" something else, the goal of the campaign is still to capture the union. And, if they are serious, labor union oppositions cannot be anything but attempts to take over the union. However successful many labor union oppositions have been during the last ten years, none has changed the character of the union. Sincere oppositionists do not capture the machine, but are captured by it; whereas insincere oppositionists knew what they were after to begin with. Of course, under certain circumstances, it may be necessary to participate in and

support such movements. But, in general, the goal must be to construct independent, unofficial instruments of class struggle, in opposition to the unions, which provide a means for class combat. In an actual struggle, only forms of organization which are composed entirely of the rank and file, which, at their friendliest, completely bypass the unions, can be of service. The intention of Kim Moody's campaign is apparently to raise the consciousness of the workers. It presents the problem from the point of view of the outsider who would politicize the workers. But, if the intention is, as it should be, to fight, then realistic forms of struggle must be found, not convenient ones. Campaigns to take over the unions, as Kim Moody himself admits, cannot serve the class struggle of the workers, because the unions, no matter who runs them, are antagonistic to it.

According to Moody, the linking of rank and file groups

> is possible on the basis of the programmatic synthesis of national economic issues and working conditions. This is to say, linkages require politics. In general alliances with other groups in industry, or the class, can be formed around such a program and the groups unified through a common struggle against the state as well as against management and the union bureaucracy. The Wallace campaign showed that an attack on the major bourgeois parties based on issues of real [?] concern to workers can attract working class support. The West Virginia's miners' strike showed that workers' self-activity directed at the state, the bosses and the union leadership can do the same, whether or not electoral action is used is a matter of tactics. The point is that the state is a focal point for struggle by groups of workers whose specified demands do not immediately appear related on the industrial level. The relationship, real enough in the economy, has to be made in a way that cuts through industrial and union (or non-union) lines, without shunting aside the specific demands. Political action, direct, industrial or electoral, offers a way to do this in the concrete realm of action.(pp.41-42)

And, further,

> The vehicle for unity in struggle is program. A program that can really accomplish such an ambitious task, must speak to the real needs of the working class as they see these issues. In so far as the radical movement can contribute to the development of such a program, and that is surely its main task at this point, it must avoid the most ancient pitfall of the left, the inability to provide a transition from the reformist demands of the workers today to revolutionary program and orgainzation . . . . Transitional demands [towards revolutionary struggle] , such as those relating to taxes, inflation and workers control of production standards, which expose the nature of the crisis, must be counterposed to reformist demands or programs (Edward Kennedy and the 'left-wing' of the Democratic Party) or demagoguery (Wallace and racism combined with psaudo-independent [?] political action). (pp. 43-44)

Although Kim Moody expresses a fine sentiment—that is, the necessity to avoid the dangers of reformism and demagoguery—nowhere does he suggest dow to do it. In contrast to the demands of reformists and demogogues Moody cites Trotsky in *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International:*

> A transitional program is a "bridge" which should lead from today's consciousness of wide layers of working class . . . to one final conclusion: the conquest of power [?] by the proletariat.' (p. 43)

Thus Moody , contrasts the program of the Fourth International with pre-World War I Social Democracy (presumably the German Social Democracy, although the Bolsheviks also comprised, at the time explicitly as well as implicitly, a section of pre-war Social Democracy). On the one hand, Social Democracy offered a practical, minimum, or reformist program; on the other hand, a maximum, or revolutionary program which remained pure rhetoric. But how these two programs are counterposed in reality will apparently be discussed somewhere else, for it is not discussed here.

According to the Social Democrats—and Kim Moody—"The vehicle for unity in struggle is program." Originally, Social Democracy conceived of electoral action as a tactic, one among many, and not as a means of obtaining power which, it was understood, could only be conquered by revolutionary means. The program of the German Social Democracy was also considered to be a vehicle for the national organization of labor. Whereas Kim Moody condemns the Social Democrats for carting out their revolutionary program on purely formal occasions, he does not suggest what use a workers' movement today can make of revolutionary objectives. I am not suggesting that Kim Moody is a Social Democrat; rather, that he has not succeeded in clarifying for the reader the distinction between his own revolutionary approach and that of the old labor movement, which he rejects.

In my opinion, the Wallace campaign did not suggest, as Kim Moody seems to believe, a practical policy which could in any way express the self-activity of the working class. Self-activity cannot be expressed through elections or through political parties, which is what makes them useful instruments for demogogues like Wallace. The self-activity of the workers can be expressed only through forms of struggle directly subject to their will, through the direct action of the workers themselves.

This brings us to the crux of the matter. In themselves, there are no such things as "reformist" demands or "transitional" demands. The counterposition which Kim Moody makes here is totally artificial. Rather, there are two contrasted kinds of *practice*: that which, at least potentially, permits the struggle to move forward to higher stages of self-activity; and that which limits the struggle, at best, to the point which it has reached, and holds it there. The problem of the Social Democracy was not primarily in its program but in its content, or practice. It was not that it fought for reforms, but that it did so through structures which determined the limits of those struggles—the hierarchic labor unions and parties which not only developed interests separate from the class needs of the proletariat but also prevented the direct assertion of the workers' struggle.

The main task of the left is not to draw up the perfect program which will unite all the various elements of the workers' struggle around the twenty-one points which will solve all the problems of the workers, but to help develop a genuinely revolutionary practice, a practice which does not simply accept the way workers understand issues today but transforms present myopia into revolutionary vision. This means developing a practical critique of the workers' struggle as it exists today, of the limitations of the various forms and objectives which it chooses and of the various conditions which it accepts. Such practical critique, stressing the genuinely self-liberating aspects of contemporary class struggle and suggesting the means of furthering them, is a central task of the left.

The reliance upon strong organization in building the CIO was only an expression of the inherent weakness, or at least the lack of self-confidence, of the workers themselves. The

workers believed, or came to believe, that they could not tolerate the strain of a permanent, unofficial class struggle which would be required, at the very least, to protect their living and working conditions. They believed, or came to believe, that a strong organization which could stand on its own—dependent upon their support, independent of their permanent activity—could protect them against the employer.

But due to this separation, the union became an independent instrument opposed to the workers. Although it did win certain advantages for them, it functioned primarily to define the limits of the class struggle and to discipline the workers in accordance with the labor contract. Strong organization and official class struggle are imconpatible with the interests of the working class. What is needed is *weak* organization and totally *unofficial* class struggle. Totally unofficial class struggle can arrive at a temporary *modus vivendi* with the employer. But it can never agree to abstain from struggle. Weak organization means that organization which depends entirely upon, and is an extension of, the direct action of the workers themselves.

The unions have served their purpose, perhaps the workers had to try the easy way before they understood that they could win only when they relied upon themselves. The opposition movements which develop today do indeed depend upon the self-reliance of the workers. It is these tendencies which must be strengthened independently of the union.

Kim Moody tries to go beyond previous left approaches to labor union reform and electoral action when he suggests the need for a new political movement which will be "a synthesis of shop-economic and political organization and struggle." Such vague phrases are of little use, however, particularly because it is not certain that the new form is not simply a disguise for the old forms. The issues which Moody raises obviously cannot be resolved in the context of this paper. The discussion must be continued elsewhere.

Joel Stein

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POINT OF VIEW

Throughout the world, particularly in the advanced capitalist countries in Eastern and Western Europe and in the United States, militants in factories, offices, schools, and neighborhoods are beginning to articulate a common vision of socialism and revolutionary action. They envision a society where production and social life generally is controlled by those who do the work, not by those who exploit the labor of others. This conception of socialism is reemerging after nearly a century of strugge by working class and social movements against their domination by political elites which have reinterpreted socialism in the image of capitalist social relations. These socialists and communist parties have reproduced within themselves the bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of the social systems they purport to oppose.

Solidarity is a group of British Revolutionaries. It is one among many to have broken out of the reformist politics of the old left. It grew out of the disintegration of the Communist movement and the development of autonomous student and worker movements in western capitalist countries, culminating in the student-worker revolts in France and Italy in 1968-69. *Root and Branch* agrees substantially with the following statement, athough it has no organizational relations with **Solidarity**.

Root and Branch hopes to further the conception that revolutionary movement is self-activity and self-organization of the workers. We are a part of their struggle, but aspire neither to lead nor to direct it. Nor is it our intention to found a new movement separate from the class. Movements do not spring from ideologies, but from the conditions of everyday life.

SOLIDARITY

Throughout the world,
the vast majority of people
have no control whatsoever
over the decisions
that most deeply and directly
affect their lives.
They sell their labour power
while others who own or control
the means of production
accumulate wealth,
make the laws and
use the whole machinery
of the State
to perpetuate and reinforce
their privileged positions

2 During the past century the living standards of working people have improved. But neither these improved living standards, nor the nationalisation of the means of production, nor the coming to power of parties claiming to represent the working class have basically altered the status of the worker as worker. Nor have they given the bulk of mankind much freedom outside of production. East and West, capitalism remains an inhuman type of society where the vast majority are bossed at work, and manipulated in consumption and leisure. Propaganda and policemen, prisons and schools, traditional values and traditional morality all serve to reinforce the power of the few and to convince or coerce the many into acceptance of a brutal, degrading and irrational system. The 'Communist' world is not communist and the 'Free' world is not free

3 The trade unions and the traditional parties of the left started in business to change all this. But they have come to terms with the existing patterns of exploitation. In fact they are now essential if exploiting society is to continue working smoothly. The unions act as middlemen in the labour market. The political parties use the struggles and aspirations of the working class for their own ends. The degeneration of working class organisations, itself the result of the failure of the revolutionary movement, has been a major factor in creating working class apathy, which in turn has led to the further degeneration of both parties and unions

4 The trade unions and political parties cannot be reformed, 'captured', or converted into instruments of working class emancipation. We don't call however for the proclamation of new unions, which in the conditions of today would suffer a similar fate to the old ones. Nor do we call for militants to tear up their union cards. Our aims are simply that the workers themselves should decide on the objectives of their struggles and that the control and organisation of these struggles should remain firmly in their own hands. The *forms* which this self-activity of the working class may take will vary considerably from country to country and from industry to industry. Its basic *content* will not

5 Socialism is not just the common ownership and control of the means of production and distribution. It means equality, real freedom, reciprocal recognition and a radical transformation in all human relations. It is 'man's positive self-consciousness'. It is man's understanding of his environment and of himself, his domination over his work and over such social institutions as he may need to create. These are not secondary aspects, which will automatically follow the expropriations of the old ruling class. On the contrary they are essential parts of the whole process of social transformation, for without them no genuine social transformation will have taken place

6 A socialist society can therefore only be built from below. Decisions concerning production and work will be taken by workers' councils composed of elected and revocable delegates. Decisions in other areas will be taken on the basis of the widest possible discussion and consultation among the people as a whole. This democratisation of society down to its very roots is what we mean by 'workers' power'

7 *Meaningful action*, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. *Sterile and harmful action* is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others– even by those allegedly acting on their behalf

8 No ruling class in history has ever relinquished its power without a struggle and

our present rulers are unlikely to be an exception. Power will only be taken from them through the conscious, autonomous action of the vast majority of the people themselves. The building of socialism will require mass understanding and mass participation. By their rigid hierarchical structure, by their ideas and by their activities, both social-democratic and bolshevik types of organisations discourage this kind of understanding and prevent this kind of participation. The idea that socialism can somehow be achieved by an elite party (however 'revolutionary') acting 'on behalf of' the working class is both absurd and reactionary

9 We do not accept the view that by itself the working class can only achieve a trade union consciousness. On the contrary we believe that its conditions of life and its experiences in production constantly drive the working class to adopt priorities and values and to find methods of organisation which challenge the established social order and established pattern of thought. These responses are implicitly socialist. On the other hand, the working class is fragmented, dispossessed of the means of communication, and its various sections are at different levels of awareness and consciousness. The task of the revolutionary organisation is to help give proletarian consciousness an explicitly socialist content, to give practical assistance to workers in struggle and to help those in different areas to exchange experiences and link up with one another

10 We do not see ourselves as yet another leadership, but merely as an instrument of working class action. The function of **Solidarity** is to help all those who are in conflict with the present authoritarian social structure, both in industry and in society at large, to generalise their experience, to make a total critique of their condition and of its causes, and to develop the mass revolutionary consciousness necessary if society is to be totally transformed

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